DPhil in Philosophy

Sartre and the Possibility of Authentic Love

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Word count: 74,500

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DPhil in Philosophy
Trinity Term 2019

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Abstract

In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre claims that all love is doomed to failure. According to Sartre, love is a bad faith attempt to capture the Other's freedom in order to secure for oneself a fixed nature. This thesis presents a novel argument for the possibility of authentic romantic love. I propose that the capacity for authentic romantic love is grounded in a prior experience of authentic love in early infancy.

Drawing on Sartre's characterisation of the mother-child relationship in *The Family Idiot,* I argue that mother and infant exist in an ambiguous union; a relation where the boundaries between self and Other are in a process of becoming. The infant's original awareness of the Other as a subject is acquired through being the object of a loving Look. This Look, since it is non-conflictual, allows for an authentic relation of mutual comprehension to develop between mother and child.

However, as the child matures, she comes to realise her ontological separation from the Other; this, combined with her socialisation into bad faith, is what makes the Look turn hostile. Alienated by the Other's Look, the child takes up the bad faith project of trying to capture the Other's freedom, causing relations with others to become conflictual.

I argue that authentic romantic love is the result of a dialectical movement that combines and surpasses the original ambiguous union and our alienated separation from the Other. In authentic love, the lovers comprehend each other as ambiguous beings whilst retaining an awareness of their ontological separation. This thesis therefore concludes that authentic romantic love is possible. I consider an implication of this for Sartre's ontology: by tracing the ontological formation of the subject, we can enhance our understanding of being-for-the-Other.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Joseph Schear and Christina Howells, for their help in the preparation of this thesis. I am forever grateful to my parents and my partner for their love and support.

Abbreviations

References to the following works have been abbreviated in the main text. Full information on these works is given in the bibliography.

MWBS	*Must We Burn Sade?*
EA	*The Ethics of Ambiguity*
SS	*The Second Sex*
PM	*The Problem of Method*
W	*Words*
B	*Baudelaire*
FI	*The Family Idiot*
SG	*Saint Genet*
HN	*Hope Now*
NE	*Notebooks for an Ethics*
WL	*What is Literature?*
EH	*Existentialism is a Humanism*
BN	*Being and Nothingness*
ASJ	*Anti-Semite and Jew*
PP	*The Phenomenology of Perception*

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to show that authentic love is possible from within the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre suggests that bad faith is widespread throughout society. 'Bad faith' is the project of pretending that one has a fixed nature in order to deny that one is free (Webber 2009). From within the project of bad faith, it is impossible to engage in a relationship of authentic love, as authentic love embraces and values the beloved's freedom. My thesis analyses how the project of bad faith is acquired, in order to show that authentic love is practically possible in modern Western society.

I approach the topic of authentic love through the lens of Sartre's existentialist philosophy. The term 'existentialism' is notoriously difficult to define (Morris 2008, 34). The core tenet of Sartre's existentialism is that 'existence precedes essence' (EH, 27-28, Webber 2018, 3). Human beings do not have fixed natures that determine how they shall act in advance. Instead, we are free to create our own essences, or characters, through choosing the projects that we pursue (Webber 2009, 21-22). Hence existentialism puts human freedom at the heart of its philosophy.

The subtitle of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* is 'An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology'. 'Ontology' refers to the study of being, whereas 'phenomenology' refers to a particular philosophical method which describes how things appear to consciousness. Therefore, the project of *Being and Nothingness* is to use phenomenological methods to study being (Morris 2008, 25-26). I shall adopt the same approach in my investigation of authentic love.

The thesis falls under the sub-discipline of the history of philosophy. It takes the writings of a single philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, as its main point of departure. It is possible to identify two different approaches in the history of philosophy. One approach adheres closely to the text and attempts to uncover what the author really thought about a topic, whereas the other creates an original argument that is based on the works of a historical philosopher. This thesis takes the second approach. I will use Sartre's ideas as a starting point for my own argument that authentic love is possible.

My thesis begins from the ontology set out by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943, 2018). My definition of authentic love comes from Sartre's posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics* (1983, 1992), written between 1947 and 1948. These *Notebooks* are Sartre's attempt to invent an ethics based on the ontology of *Being and Nothingness*. The *Notebooks* were never finished, as Sartre abandoned the project of trying to show how such an ethics could be possible.

The later chapters of this thesis make use of Sartre's biographies and autobiography, as well as his essay *The Problem of Method* (1960, 1963). The main shift in Sartre's philosophical thought, according to Jonathan Webber (2018, 125), is first clearly reflected in his biography of Jean Genet (*Saint Genet* 1952, 1963). Here, Sartre abandons his theory of radical freedom and instead claims that projects can acquire inertia the longer that they are pursued. This part of the thesis also draws upon Sartre's autobiography, *Words* (1964, 1967), and his biography of Gustave Flaubert, *The Family Idiot* (1971-72, 1981). I make occasional references to Sartre's early work, *Baudelaire* (1946, 1967), a biography of Charles Baudelaire. Alongside the biographies, the later chapters of this thesis engage with the

interviews that Sartre gave in the last decade of his life, including his controversial work with Benny Lévy, *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews* (1991, 1996).

Although Sartre's philosophy is the main focus of my thesis, I frequently refer to the writings of his lover and colleague, Simone de Beauvoir. Her text, *Must We Burn Sade?* (1951, 1953), a critical analysis of the erotic fiction of the Marquis de Sade, is of crucial importance to my account of authentic love. Beauvoir describes the erotic encounter between two lovers as an 'ambiguous unity' (MWBS, 33). I will argue that it is through an ambiguous union with the Other that one can escape bad faith. Other works by Beauvoir that inform my argument include *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947, 1976), her attempt at creating an existentialist ethics, and *The Second Sex* (1949, 2009), her influential analysis of patriarchy.

The question driving this thesis is not one of textual analysis. As I adopt the second approach to history of philosophy, I am not primarily concerned with whether Sartre himself thought that authentic love was possible. My question is rather: is authentic love possible, given Sartre's account of human being in *Being and Nothingness*? My argument is consistent with Sartre's philosophy, but I do not claim that he would have endorsed it.

This thesis is primarily concerned with two types of love: the love between mother and child and romantic love. I understand 'romantic' love to refer to the love that exists between adult partners, a mix of erotic love and companionship. I will only consider monogamous relationships in this thesis. I will argue that the possibility of authentic romantic love as an adult is grounded in the experience of authentic mother-child love in infancy.

Other philosophers who have attempted to show that authentic romantic love is possible from within Sartre's philosophy include Thomas C. Anderson (1993) and Linda A. Bell (1989).[1] Both argue that authentic love will be possible after a radical conversion to authenticity. I reject this argument in Chapter 2, on the grounds that a radical conversion is impossible. As I mentioned earlier, on Sartre's later view, projects cannot be overthrown effortlessly and instantaneously because they acquire more inertia the longer that one pursues them (Webber 2018, 5, 11).

Another argument that authentic relations with others are possible is what I call the 'communication argument' (Martinot 2005, Heter 2006a, Van der Wielen 2014). The communication argument claims that we can be directly in touch with the Other as a subject through communication and thereby overcome our bad faith. However, I shall argue that the communication argument is unsuccessful because it fails to address our original conflict with the Other.

Neither of these arguments considers mother-child love as the foundation of our capacity for authentic love as adults. In general, motherhood has been ignored and undervalued in philosophy. Cynthia Coe (2013) illustrates this point by citing how Plato, the founding father of Western philosophy, claimed that motherhood is not creative. It produces only mortal beings, whereas philosophy and the sciences create immortal ideas. The latter form of creation is higher and more noble than the former. Sartre himself is guilty of ignoring motherhood in his early philosophy but, in *The Family Idiot*, he provides an insightful account of mother-child love that deserves more attention from Sartre scholars. In doing so,

[1] Please also see my earlier works Gibson (2016) and Gibson (2017) for a briefer discussion of authentic love.

I will draw upon Sartre's biographies to develop my account of the mother-child relationship. I will supplement my philosophical argument with experimental studies from developmental psychology. I will briefly consider Freudian psychoanalysis, but only as a counterargument to my account.

My research is subject to the following limitations. Although much of what I will say about the mother-child relationship could be applied to early interactions between infants and any primary caregiver, for the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to discuss only the relationship between infants and their biological mothers—and, in particular, those mothers who love and want their child. In addition, I have limited my discussion of romantic love to heterosexual relationships, although it is likely that my arguments would apply to homosexual relationships as well. Finally, my conclusions apply only to love as it exists in contemporary Western society. As I shall explain in Chapter 2, I believe that phenomenology cannot generate an account of love that applies universally across time and space. Therefore, I limit my conclusions to what I have directly experienced.

I will conclude this introduction with a brief overview of each chapter. Chapter 1 begins with a detailed explanation of Sartre's ontology in *Being and Nothingness*. I will describe what bad faith is and how it is pursued in our relations with others, including love. I will contrast Sartre's account of bad faith love with his description of authentic love in the *Notebooks*. This chapter poses the question that my thesis sets out to answer. In Chapter 2, I consider and reject the communication and conversion arguments as solutions to the problem of authentic love. I conclude that we need to further investigate how we originally come to be aware of the Other as a subject. In Chapter 3, I give my own account of the early relationship between mother and child. I claim that mother and infant exist in an ambiguous

union, where we first encounter the Other. Chapter 4 argues that the original relationship to the Other is not conflictual and that therefore mother-child love is authentic. From this, I argue in Chapter 5 that it is possible to experience authentic romantic love as an adult.

Chapter 1. Sartre's Account of Love

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre makes a convincing case that romantic love is doomed to failure (BN, 482). He argues that love is a concrete manifestation of the fundamental project to be God (BN, 491), which is the bad faith attempt to appear as if one is conscious and has a fixed nature.[2] Pursuit of the project to be God is widespread across society, and romantic love is no exception.

There are many elements of Sartre's description of bad faith love that we can recognise in our own relationships. However, at the same time, not many of us would agree with Sartre's pessimistic conclusion that all love is doomed to failure. We believe that we have experienced a selfless, genuine love that is not a futile attempt to achieve an impossible goal (henceforth known as 'authentic love'). Sartre describes such a love in the posthumously published *Notebooks for an Ethics*. But then we are left with the challenge of demonstrating how an authentic love could be possible in a society with widespread bad faith. The aim of this thesis is to resolve this problem.

I will begin by outlining Sartre's ontology, before describing bad faith and the God-project. I then explain how the Other is utilised in the God-project, first in general and then in the particular case of romantic love. Finally, I discuss Sartre's account of authentic love.

[2] This understanding of the God-project is based on Jonathan Webber's work (2009, 2010, 2018), on which I draw heavily throughout the chapter.

Sartre's Ontology

To elucidate Sartre's claim that all human beings are following the God-project, one must begin with Sartre's ontology. In this section, I will give a brief overview of the two modes of being, according to Sartre: being-for-itself and being-in-itself. I will explain why Sartre claims that consciousness is nothingness, and that human existence precedes essence. Together, these claims entail that human beings are radically free.

In the Introduction to *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre identifies two modes of being: being-for-itself and being-in-itself. Being-for-itself is the mode of existence of human consciousness. According to Katherine Morris (2008, 61), consciousness is 'for-itself' because, for Sartre, all consciousness is intentional. What Sartre means by this is that all consciousness is consciousness of or about something (BN, 9). In all conscious episodes, there is some intentional object of which one is conscious (McCulloch 1994, 5). For example, when I perceive a tree, the tree is the intentional object of my perception. Furthermore, in Sartre's view, there is nothing more to consciousness than this activity of intending objects. Consciousness is not any kind of container for mental objects; it has no internal structures or contents.

The intentionality of consciousness is the basis for Sartre's claim that consciousness is nothingness (BN, 157). This claim does not mean that being-for-itself is non-being and that therefore consciousness does not exist. Instead, Sartre is stating that consciousness is an activity of bringing nothingness into the world (Barnes 1992, 18). As an activity, consciousness is nothingness in the sense that it is not a 'thing'—i.e. that it is not an entity (Morris 2008, 59). These abstract claims require further elaboration.

Nothingness could not exist in a world without human consciousness. Imagine a world only populated by non-conscious rocks. In such a world, could it be said that anything does not exist? In Sartre's view, there would be no non-being in this world of rocks. This is because it is only for consciousness that things can not exist. It is consciousness that introduces non-being into the world, such as absence (BN, 41) or lack (BN, , 138).

What must consciousness be like in order to be able to introduce non-being into a world full of being (BN, 86)? Sartre argues that it is impossible for being to produce non-being (BN, 43) and therefore consciousness must be the foundation of its own nothingness. The source of consciousness's nothingness is its intentional structure; namely, the fact that it exists at a distance from itself and its objects (BN, 128-9).

To understand why consciousness exists at a distance from itself, we need to examine two different kinds of consciousness: positional and non-positional consciousness. 'Positional consciousness' is consciousness of a distinct object—for example, my perception of a tree. According to Sartre, positional consciousness of an object is also consciousness of oneself as not being that object. For the tree to appear as a distinct object is for it to appear as not being part of or coinciding with my awareness (BN, 248). This is also true for modes of positional consciousness besides perception, for 'distinct' does not mean only distinct from me in space. For example, when I desire a chocolate bar, the desired chocolate bar appears as distinct from me, in the sense that it is something that I lack and that I aim at. Again, its appearance as distinct from me is an appearance of it not-being me.[3]

[3] Versions of this argument can be found in Barnes (1992), Catalano (1985), and Gardner (2009).

Because all objects of positional consciousness appear as not-being me, in every episode of positional consciousness I am aware of myself. I am aware of myself as not-being my object. Hence all instances of positional consciousness are self-conscious. However, this self-consciousness is 'non-positional' (BN, 12) because it is not a consciousness of myself as a distinct object, posited in reflection. Rather, I am conscious of myself insofar as the tree appears as not-being me. Sartre also calls this 'pre-reflective consciousness' because it is a self-consciousness that is prior to reflection.

So consciousness is the foundation of its own nothingness because it is nihilated being. In every episode of positional consciousness, consciousness is conscious of itself as not-being its object. This is why consciousness exists at a distance from its objects.

Consciousness also exists at a distance from itself. Reflection is an attempt for consciousness to recover its being—to discover its being in a positive sense, rather than being aware of itself only as not-being its object. But reflection is a positional consciousness of consciousness itself. This means that it is also a non-positional self-consciousness of not-being its object. The object of reflection is consciousness itself, so reflection is also non-positionally conscious of not-being itself. The consequence of this is that consciousness can never coincide with itself in reflection. Suppose that I am playing football. I try to reflect on the consciousness of playing football, but then I am a consciousness-reflecting on a consciousness-playing-football, and therefore I am no longer a consciousness-playing-football. I posit the consciousness-playing-football in reflection, but then I am not this consciousness-playing-football—I am a consciousness-reflecting and it is my object.

This gap in reflection is the nothingness at the heart of being (BN, 129). This is why Sartre says that consciousness is its own nothingness. Sartre is not claiming that consciousness does not exist, but that it exists as the sort of thing that is separated from itself by a nothingness.

Returning to Sartre's ontology, the intentionality of consciousness leads Sartre to posit a second mode of being: being-in-itself. Being-in-itself is the mode of existence of consciousness's objects (BN, 23). Roughly, it corresponds to the being of material, non-conscious things. The in-itself has a set of fixed properties, which it cannot surpass and which totally exhaust its being. In other words, the in-itself has a fixed nature—a set of properties that are necessary for it to be the kind of thing that it is and which determine its behaviour (Webber 2009, 106).

In contrast, consciousness lacks a fixed nature because it cannot be causally determined. Deterministic causal laws hold only between beings (Webber 2009, 47). But consciousness is not a being; it is just the activity of intending objects. As consciousness cannot be determined, Sartre claims that human beings are radically free.

According to Jonathan Webber (2009, 8), the idea that consciousness lacks a fixed nature is the true meaning of Sartre's famous claim that, for human beings, 'existence precedes essence' (EH, 27-28; also BN, 370). This claim should not be interpreted as stating that humans lack any kind of essence, but that the essences we have are not fixed natures. For Webber, a person's 'essence' consists of the character traits that incline that person towards certain behaviours, thoughts, and attitudes (Webber 2009, 17, 22). These character traits result from the projects that one has freely chosen to pursue. Therefore, although human

beings have an essence, this essence is not a fixed nature (2009, 21). Character traits do not determine our behaviour because the projects they are grounded in can be abandoned and replaced. What the claim 'existence precedes essence' is intended to convey is that human beings exist first, and then form their own essences from the projects they choose to pursue.

This claim might initially strike us as strange—we do not think that a person experiences cowardice as the result of choosing to be a coward. But Webber does not hold that traits are identical with projects—traits are dispositions to act, think, and feel which result from projects (2009, 4). A project shapes how we experience the world. It makes the environment appear as if it presents certain reasons to us—for example, if I want to study at Oxford, the sign in the quad saying 'Keep off the grass' appears as a reason to stay off the grass (Webber 2018, 6). What my project aims at is what I judge to be valuable—here, it is an Oxford education that appears to me as valuable. One need not be explicitly aware of how one's projects shape one's experience, nor does a project have to be the object of explicit deliberation in order to be adopted (Webber 2018, 41). For example, we are not explicitly aware of the project of staying alive, nor is it adopted as the result of rational deliberation, but staying alive still counts as a project because it is premised on the value-judgement that staying alive is good, and because it aims at a specific valued end (2009, 68-69).

That we are free to adopt and abandon projects that shape how we experience the world is the basis for our radical freedom (Webber 2009, 61). Projects have no inertia of their own—they are only sustained by my continued choice to pursue them (Webber 2018, 4). If I abandon my project, my experience of the world will change. What I previously experienced as a reason for a certain action now no longer compels me. If I abandon the project of

studying at Oxford and instead adopt the project of being a rebel, the sign on grass now invites me to disobey it.[4]

However, Sartre thinks that we rarely abandon our projects altogether and create new ones (BN, 607-8). Our projects are arranged hierarchically such that if I abandon one project, I may have to discard or modify many others. This provides a disincentive for abandoning projects, although I remain free to do so. For example, I am free to abandon my project of studying at Oxford but this would put into question other, more fundamental projects, such as my project to become an academic philosopher or my project to be a certain type of person. Not wishing to discontinue these projects, I therefore do not abandon my project of studying at Oxford.

Bad Faith and the God-Project

Human beings are radically free because they are free to choose the projects that shape their experience of the world. However, when people are reminded of their radical freedom, they experience anguish (BN, 66). I will first describe the three different types of anguish that Sartre identifies, before explaining why the experience of freedom is unpleasant.

The first type of anguish that Sartre describes in *Being and Nothingness* is 'anguish in the face of the future' (BN, 70). This is experienced upon realising that one's projects in the present cannot determine one's actions in the future. Sartre gives an example of walking along a clifftop. Although I do not want to throw myself off the edge now, in the future I

[4] Webber does not endorse Sartre's indeterminist conception of radical freedom. However, Webber argues that Sartre's idea of freedom over our character does not require that we accept Sartre's theory of radical freedom (2009, 66).

might choose to do so, and there is nothing that I can commit to in the present to prevent this from happening.

A second type of anguish is 'anguish in the face of the past' (BN, 70). This anguish arises from awareness that our past decisions cannot bind us (Webber 2009, 66). Sartre illustrates this with an example of a gambler who has resolved to quit but, as soon as he approaches the gaming table, his 'resolutions dissolve' (BN, 70). His past project of quitting is unable to prevent him from adopting a new project in the present of giving into temptation.

A third type of anguish is what Sartre calls 'ethical anguish' (BN, 77). This anguish is experienced when one realises that there are no objective moral values. Everything that I consider to be valuable results from the projects that I freely choose to pursue. From within my project, it appears to me that staying alive (for example) is objectively valuable. But if I were to abandon this project, staying alive would no longer be presented to me as valuable. There are no objective values that I can appeal to excuse or justify my choice of project—'I decide it alone' (BN, 79).

All three types of anguish involve an awareness of our freedom but this is not an explicit awareness. Webber makes use of the distinction between extensional and intensional awareness to illuminate this (2009, 75). Extensional awareness is awareness *of* something, whereas intensional awareness is awareness *that* something is the case. This corresponds to Sartre's distinction between thetic and non-thetic consciousness, where 'thetic' consciousness refers to a conscious judgement or propositional attitude. Webber illustrates the distinction between intensional and extensional awareness with the example of Superman standing before Lois Lane. Lois Lane is unaware that Clark Kent is Superman.

She therefore has extensional awareness *of* Clark Kent standing before her, just because Clark Kent is identical with Superman, but she lacks intensional awareness *that* it is Clark Kent who is standing there.

Applying this to the case of radical freedom, human beings have extensional awareness *of* their radical freedom but most humans lack intensional awareness *that* they are radically free. Anguish is extensional awareness of our freedom from within the project of bad faith. If we were to abandon the project of bad faith, we would no longer find our freedom troubling. For the remainder of this section, I will explore the Sartrean idea of bad faith.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre describes bad faith as a widespread social phenomenon (BN, 103; Webber 2009, 106). In Webber's view, the project of bad faith is adopted as a result of living in a society where people continually try to appear as if they have fixed natures (2009, 112). In such a society, we do not encounter the contrary idea that human beings are free to create their own essences. From within the project of bad faith, we are motivated to pressure each other to pretend as if we have fixed natures. If you behave in a way that suggests that you are free, then this casts doubt on my belief that I have a fixed nature. This is why bad faith tends to spread throughout a society (Webber 2018, 122).

On Webber's reading, anguish does not motivate the adoption of the project of bad faith, but rather motivates us to continue denying our freedom (2009, 113). This is because bad faith attaches positive value to having a fixed nature and negative value to human freedom, which is the opposite of a fixed nature. In Sartrean terminology, freedom is an 'anti-value' (BN, 791; Webber 2009, 114). It is unpleasant to be reminded that we are free and do not have

fixed natures. Therefore we are repelled by our freedom and anything that suggests it (2009, 116). This aversion provides continued motivation to deny our freedom.

In pretending that we have a fixed nature, bad faith is a denial of the human condition (Webber 2009, 74). Human existence has two dimensions: facticity and transcendence. In bad faith, we affirm facticity as transcendence and transcendence as facticity, instead of holding them in valid coordination (BN, 99). To understand what Sartre means by this, we must define 'facticity' and 'transcendence'.

'Facticity' refers to all the facts that are true of a person. According to Webber, this includes not only how we acted in the past and the properties of our bodies and environment, but also our character traits—our 'essence' (Webber 2009, 22).[5] 'Transcendence' refers to the human ability to change our situation (2009, 76). A 'situation' is the way that the world appears to me, as shaped by my freely chosen projects (2009, 32). If my project is to write my PhD thesis, then my laptop appears like a tool for work rather than a recreational device for watching TV shows. But it is possible for me to transcend my situation by adopting a new project—for example, abandoning my PhD to become a climate change activist. Living off-grid to reduce my carbon footprint, my laptop now appears to me as a wasteful use of the Earth's scarce resources.

Bad faith pretends that facticity limits one's ability to transcend the situation. To maintain that one has a fixed nature is to believe that one's actions are determined by one's situation. It is true that one's situation inclines one to act in certain ways, but it is always possible to

[5] Webber includes character traits in facticity because Sartre says that 'essence' explains one's actions (BN, 74-5). Only character traits can perform this explanatory role (Webber 2009, 21). Essence is part of facticity, so character traits are part of facticity (2009, 76).

change one's situation by choosing to adopt a new project. We are free to act in ways other than those to which our character inclines us because we are free to create new character traits (Webber 2009, 22).

Bad faith goes against Sartre's description of the human being as 'a being that is what it is not, and that is not what it is.' (BN, 101). This is because, according to Webber, this claim expresses Sartre's view that one is not identical with one's essence, because one's essence can change (2009, 22-23). A person is what she is not—she is her projects, but she can always revise these projects without changing identity—and she is not what she is—she is not her essence, because she can always acquire a new set of character traits in the future (2009, 48).

So far, I have described what bad faith is, but I have not described how bad faith is possible. If we are aware that we are radically free, as evidenced by anguish, how is it possible to pretend that we have fixed natures? The initial answer to this question is to do with how we practice bad faith. Matthew Eshleman (2008a) argues that we often practice bad faith by trying to identify with our social roles and identities. Suppose that I identify with being a philosopher. I try to get a job at an academic institution, I spend my time reading difficult philosophy books, and I demonstrate a willingness to argue with regard to any contentious issue in politics and morality. I am pretending that being a philosopher is part of my fixed nature. In one sense, it is true that my freedom as a philosopher is genuinely limited. In most people's minds, a philosopher works at a university, reads philosophy books, and enjoys arguing. If I did not do these things, this would put it question whether I am a philosopher. Therefore, as a philosopher, it is true that I am not free to abandon my philosophy books. The same argument can be made for cases of bad faith where we try to identify with our

qualities, for example, kindness. As a kind person, I am not free to insult other people, for then I would no longer be a kind person.

That social roles and qualities limit freedom is one way in which the practice of bad faith is possible. As a philosopher, it is true that I have to read philosophy books—or else I will no longer be a philosopher. So I can tell myself that my freedom is genuinely limited.

However, the question of how bad faith is possible still remains. I am always free to abandon my identity as a philosopher or as a kind person, and choose a different project. But bad faith tries to pretend that I am not free to do this. Bad faith is the project that my nature is fixed—that I cannot change it. This raises a puzzle: one must be aware of one's freedom in order to be motivated to continue the project but, if one is aware of one's freedom, it seems impossible to maintain that one is determined. Webber's answer is that we have only an extensional awareness of our freedom, not an intensional awareness that we are free (Webber 2009, 83). In bad faith, we are aware of our freedom but this is never explicit knowledge that we are free. This makes it possible to deceive ourselves that we have fixed natures.

Metaphysically, the project of bad faith is possible because of the non-being at the heart of consciousness. Consciousness cannot coincide with itself and so it is always possible to put aspects of one's nature into question. For example, I reflect on myself and judge myself to be a coward but, in my positional consciousness of being a coward, I am also non-positionally aware of myself as not-being a coward. Consciousness is never one with the object of its awareness, even when that object is itself (BN, 112-3).

So far, I have described bad faith as the project of making it seem as if one has a fixed nature. However, we do not wish to have a fixed nature like a stone has a fixed nature—what we really want is to have a fixed nature but also remain conscious: 'it is as a consciousness that it wants to have the in-itself's impermeability and infinite density' (BN, 735). Such a being would be determined like being-in-itself but at the same time be conscious and self-aware—it would be an in-itself-for-itself. Furthermore, I would like to be the source of my fixed nature, in order to have complete control of it. As a human being, my existence is contingent—it was possible that I might not have existed. I desire instead to have necessary existence and to be my own cause (BN, 797). Sartre argues that only God could have this sort of existence (BN, 735). Therefore, the project of bad faith is the project to be God (Webber 2009, 106-7).

Sartre states that the project to be God, or 'God-Project',[6] is the fundamental project of human beings (BN, 735-6). It is the foundation of our hierarchy of projects, from which all other concrete projects derive. All our concrete projects are ways of pursuing the God-project. For example, the project of being a philosopher aims at being a philosopher necessarily. If I were a philosopher necessarily, I would not feel anxious about one day deciding to give up philosophy, or being challenged by someone who thinks that I am not a 'real' philosopher. My identity as a philosopher would be secure. I would also feel that my existence as philosopher is justified and not a random accident of the universe, contingent and the result of chance. But, at the same time, I do not want to be a philosopher in the mode of a stone being a stone. I want to remain conscious and self-aware. I would also like my identity as a philosopher to be self-caused—I chose to become a philosopher. So my project

[6] As the project to be God is referred to in Zheng (2002, 130) and Anderson (1993, 54).

is to be a philosopher in the mode of being-in-itself-for-itself (Zheng 2002, 131; Webber, 2009).

However, the God-project is doomed to failure. Firstly, I cannot have any self-caused fixed nature, because humans are contingent, free beings. Secondly, the very idea of an in-itself-for-itself is contradictory and could not exist. Consciousness and self-awareness are dynamic. They are the properties of a being that is not one with itself. Consciousness therefore cannot be part of an unchanging being (Webber 2009, 106). If consciousness could coincide with itself and *be* something (for example, in self-reflection), then it could no longer be conscious *of* its object, for to be conscious *of* an object is to be conscious of not-being that object.

So far, I have argued that the project of bad faith is the project to be God. However, in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre sometimes suggests that the God-project is an inevitable feature of the human condition. If the God-project is part of the human condition, then this would mean that it cannot be in bad faith, for bad faith is the attempt to flee the human condition. I will consider the evidence for this argument but ultimately I conclude that the God-project is only a contingent feature of our lives, and therefore can be considered to be in bad faith.

In the chapter 'Concrete Relations with the Other', Sartre states that the for-itself is a flight towards the in-itself-for-itself (BN, 480). He asserts that the for-itself 'does not exist *first*, in order subsequently to attain being'. Rather, 'the for-itself is this very flight; it cannot be distinguished from the original nihilation'. Sartre appears to claim that to be for-itself is to aim at becoming in-itself-for-itself. Later on, this is suggested again, when Sartre emphasises that 'consciousness is *in fact* the project to found itself, i.e. to attain the dignity

of the in-itself-for-itself, or the in-itself-that-is-its own-cause.' (BN, 802). Sartre also identifies 'man' with the 'aim to be God, or, alternatively, man is fundamentally the desire to be God.' (BN, 735). Two pages later, he states that freedom is only a property of a being that aims at being-for-itself-in-itself: 'freedom can arise only as a being that makes itself the desire to be, i.e. as the project-for-itself of being *in-itself-for-itself*' (BN, 737). All these quotes seem to suggest that the God-project is part of the human condition.

However, it is possible to interpret these quotes in another way. It is true that the for-itself or consciousness is a pursuit of the in-itself. Consciousness is intentional, so it is always bound to the in-itself in the sense of being nothing more than a relation to the in-itself (its intentional objects). Consciousness also is a constant negation of the in-itself, since consciousness of any object is always a non-positional consciousness of not-being that object. In the former sense, consciousness is a pursuit of the in-itself (BN, 480, 802, 735); in the latter sense, consciousness is a flight from the in-itself (BN, 184). Before Sartre states that freedom is the property of a being that is the desire to be, he also claims that desire is a lack of being (BN, 737). Therefore, what he appears to be saying here is that freedom is the property of a being that is not its object—that it is a flight from the in-itself.

My reinterpretation of the quotes as making a statement about consciousness's intentionality is supported by the evidence that Sartre believes that the God-project is not part of the human condition. For example, Sartre considers the objection that, if man is the desire to be God, then this would constitute a fixed human nature and man would no longer be free (BN, 735). He responds that the God-project is never pursued just as the God-project, but is rather realised in an infinite number of concrete projects (for example, being a philosopher) (BN, 735-6). He affirms that this original choice of ourselves that we make—my choice to be a

philosopher—is a free choice. Discussing a particular fundamental project of being inferior, he asserts, 'Thus we have found the fundamental act of freedom, the act that gives its meaning to any particular action that I may be led to consider…it is the choice of myself within the world' (BN, 604). If all concrete instances of the God-project are free choices, and the God-project must always be pursued through a concrete project, then this suggests that that it is possible to choose not to follow the God-project. A choice is 'free' only if one is free to choose otherwise.

Sartre again suggests that the God-project is not part of the human condition when he describes it as man's passion (BN, 796-7). Our passion is the opposite of Christ's because we lose ourselves as human beings in order to be God. The God-project is thus an attempt to deny the human condition and to pretend to be something else. If the God-project is denying the human condition, then it cannot be part of the human condition.

Finally, Sartre claims that we are not doomed forever to pursue the God-project because it is possible to abandon it. Existential psychoanalysis is going to reveal the God-project to us (BN, 810). It is going to show us human beings what we really are—that we are the beings '*through whom values exist*.' Then, our 'freedom will become conscious of itself'. So the God-project is not part of the human condition because, in the God-project, what we truly are as human beings is hidden from us. Through uncovering the God-project, existential psychoanalysis is 'a means of deliverance and salvation'. If one just learns that one is pursuing the God-project and does not abandon it, this will not be sufficient for salvation. People who do not abandon the God-project are 'condemned to despair'.

These quotes suggest not only that is it possible to abandon the God-project, but also that we *ought* to abandon the God-project—that it is morally wrong to follow the God-project. The alternative to the God-project is authenticity. Authenticity is the project of embracing the human condition, including both our facticity and our transcendence. Sartre proposes authenticity as an alternative to bad faith in a footnote.

> If it is a matter of indifference whether to be in good or bad faith, because bad faith takes hold of good faith and slides into its project even at its origin, that does not mean that we are unable radically to escape from bad faith. But that would require corrupted being to reclaim itself. We will call this 'authenticity': its description does not belong here. (BN, 117n27)

We will be able to escape our bad faith relations with others after a radical conversion:

> These considerations do not rule out the possibility of a morality of deliverance and salvation. But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion, which we cannot discuss here. (BN, 543n34.)

Putting all these quotes together, existential psychoanalysis will enable corrupted being to reclaim itself. It will deliver and save us from bad faith by revealing the God-project to us, so that we can abandon it in a radical conversion. This new project that we will adopt after becoming aware of the human condition and embracing it is authenticity.

I will return to the topic of authenticity at the end of this chapter. In the next section, I will explore how the God-project is pursued in relations with other people.

The God-Project and the Look

Relations with other people play a crucial role in the God-project. It is through the Other that I come closest to securing a fixed nature. To show why this is the case, I will first explain

how we become aware of the Other as a subject, before explaining how the Other confers upon me qualities that feel 'fixed', and finally demonstrating why the God-project is still unsuccessful.

Sartre claims that we are aware of the Other as a subject through the Look (BN, 370). He frames his argument in terms of the problem of other minds (McCulloch 1994, 121). The problem of other minds is the question of how we can know that other people are conscious subjects. What looks like a person in front of me could in fact be a 'machine' which behaves as if it is conscious but in fact lacks any conscious thought (BN, 311). I cannot verify if this person is conscious because I have no direct experience of their mind. This line of reasoning can lead to solipsism, which is the belief that only I am conscious (BN, 317). Sartre rejects solipsism and asserts that we have a direct intuition of the Other as subject akin to the *cogito*, which is Descartes' famous claim, 'I think therefore I am' (BN, 366). According to Sartre, Descartes never proved he existed because non-positional self-consciousness means that I have always been aware of my existence (BN, 345). Similarly, Sartre does not need to *prove* that the Other exists, for we have always had a non-positional consciousness of the Other. I am non-positionally aware of the Other as subject through being the object of a Look.

Sartre illustrates his theory of the Look with an example of someone spying at a keyhole (BN, 355). Spying at the keyhole, I am absorbed in what is taking place behind the door. I have a non-positional awareness of myself as not-being my object of perception, but I do not explicitly posit myself as an object in reflection. But suddenly I hear footsteps behind me and my being is transformed (BN, 356-7). I realise that I can be seen by others in a shared world. I become aware of myself as jealous and feel shame. This transformation is what Sartre describes as the Look (BN, 353).

The new kind of self-consciousness that appears with the Look is an unreflective consciousness of myself as an object for the Other. It is not reflective self-consciousness, in which I am aware of myself as an object for myself; nor is it pre-reflective self-consciousness, in which I am not aware of myself as an object posited, but as not-being the object that I posit (BN, 357). Rather, this is a consciousness of myself as an object posited by the Other. Sartre terms this new dimension of my existence 'being-for-the-Other' (BN, 348). [7]

Through being an object for the Other, the Other as subject is revealed to me. This is because one can be an object only for another subject (BN, 369). I can never be aware of the Other's awareness, because the Other's awareness is nothing but the intending of objects. To be aware of it would be to make it into my object, and thus take away its character as intentionality. However, I can be aware of the Other's awareness through being conscious of myself as the Other's object (Webber 2009, 126-7).

My being-for-the-Other cannot be derived from being-for-itself: 'being-for-the-Other is not an ontological structure of the for-itself' (BN, 384). In order to experience my being-for-the-Other, I need the Look of another person. Before the Other arrived on the scene, I was not a jealous person but a pure consciousness of the keyhole. It is being an object for the Other that confers the attributes 'jealous' and 'vulgar' upon me.

[7] In Sarah Richmond's new translation of *Being and Nothingness*, she translates what was previously known as 'being-for-others' as 'being-for-the-Other'. In older translations of texts, however, such as the *Notebooks*, the term used is 'being-for-others'. For purposes of this thesis, I shall treat the two terms as equivalent.

I will now argue that being an object for the Other is crucial for our pursuit of the God-project. The God-project aims to make it seem like we are conscious beings that have a fixed nature. Being looked-at by the Other is the closest that one gets to having a fixed nature. However, the God-project is still doomed to failure. Firstly, the Look reveals the Other's freedom, which suggests to me that I am also free. Secondly, the Other's Look may give me a nature that I do not like, or that does not accurately reflect my essence. This reveals to me that I cannot have a fixed nature and that to have a fixed nature is to lose the characteristics of consciousness. The pursuit and failure of the God-project means that our relations with others are conflictual: '[t]he essence of relations between consciousnesses is not *Mitsein*; it is conflict.' (BN, 564).

In order to pretend to oneself that one has a fixed nature, one needs to be able to conceive of oneself as an object in the mode of being-in-itself. Only the in-itself can have a fixed nature. It is through the Look that we acquire the ability to conceive of ourselves in this way.

As described above, the Look makes me aware of myself as the object of another person's consciousness. I immediately recognise myself as the jealous person that the Other is looking at. This experience is what Sartre calls shame. There are two senses of shame for Sartre: pure or original shame, which is my recognition that I am the Other's object (BN, 308, 358), and negative or moral shame, which is the feeling of being ashamed of the Other's negative evaluation of oneself (Webber 2009, 121). It is the first sense of shame that is utilised by the God-project. I experience pure shame even when the Other judges me positively because it is just my recognition of myself as being the Other's object (BN, 392). Pure shame is the recognition that I exist in the world with an outside that can be viewed by others (BN, 360). Previously, the world that I existed in was my situation—my projects

coloured how the world appeared to me. In the Look of the Other, I find myself inserted into the Other's situation, where I am a jealous person that he comes across spying at the keyhole (BN, 358, 360, 363).

But now not only do I have an outside, I also experience myself as having a fixed nature:

> If there is an other, however or whoever he may be, and whatever relations he has with me, and even if he does not act on me in any way other than through the pure arising of his being, I have an outside, and I have a *nature*. My original fall is the Other's existence, and shame—like pride—is my apprehension of myself as a nature, even though this nature itself escapes me and is unknowable as such. (BN, 360)

The Look makes me feel like I have a nature because it makes me aware of myself as an object. It is an immediate recognition of oneself as an object for another consciousness, with properties that are fixed by the Other. To this extent, the Look of the Other allows me to experience myself as a being-in-itself: 'shame reveals to me that this being is what I *am*—not in the mode of *was*, or 'having to be', but *in-itself*.' (BN, 359)

The Look can help to neutralise the threat of my radical freedom. As an object for the Other, my freedom becomes like a quality of my fixed nature. 'Strictly speaking, I do not feel myself losing my freedom, in order to become a *thing*; instead, my freedom is over there, outside the freedom that I live, like a given attribute of this being that I am for the other.' (BN, 360). My freedom is no longer experienced as a possibility of abandoning all my projects, but as a particular property of a predictable, object-like being.

It is only through the Look that I can acquire a fixed nature that feels properly 'fixed'. This is because I cannot control what the Other thinks of me. A fixed nature would determine

me—my properties would not be the result of my own free will. If I had a fixed nature to be lazy, I would feel determined to commit lazy acts. I would not experience my laziness as my own choice. When the Other judges me to be lazy, it feels fixed because I do not choose to be lazy; this label is conferred upon me from the outside. At the same time, I immediately recognise myself as being this object for the Other. Therefore, my laziness has the appearance of being both fixed and part of my nature.

Because my being-for-the-Other does not originate with me, I cannot know it entirely and with certainty. This contributes to my feeling that it is a fixed nature which determines me and is outside of my control: '[t]he Other holds a secret—the secret of what I am…. By virtue of consciousness the Other is for me simultaneously the one who has stolen my being from me and the one who causes "there to be" a being which is my being.' (BN, 386).

So far, I have only described how the Other gives me a nature that feels properly 'fixed'. But Sartre also claims that it is the Other who gives us our ability to conceive of ourselves as objects. Therefore, the Other's Look is even more fundamental to the God-project—it is the Other who gives us the ability to think of ourselves as objects with fixed natures (Eshleman 2008a).

> …by freezing my possibilities, the Other reveals to me that it is impossible for me to be an object unless it is for another freedom…. [W]hen I naïvely postulate that it is possible that—without realizing it—I am an objective being , I implicitly presuppose, in that very claim, the Other's existence: for how could I be an object, other than for a subject? Thus the Other is for me in the first instance the being for whom I am an object, i.e. the being through whom I gain my objecthood. If it must merely be possible for me to conceive any one of my properties in the objective mode, the Other is already given. (BN, 369)

Sartre claims that, whenever I think of myself as an object, I am adopting the Other's perspective. This would include whenever I think of myself as having a fixed nature. The Other does not have to be factually present when I objectify myself; rather, I gain this dimension of my being through the Other. When I reflect, I try to adopt the Other's perspective on myself.[8] I have internalised the Other's Look.

> Being-for-the-Other is a constant fact of my human reality and I grasp it, with its *factual* necessity, in the slightest thought that I form about myself. Wherever I go, whatever I do, I am only changing my distances to the object-Other, only following roads towards the Other….The Other is present to me everywhere, as that through which I become an object. (BN, 381).

Another way, besides reflection, that the Other participates in my objectification of myself concerns social roles and identities. In bad faith, when I reflect upon myself, I identify wholly with my social roles and identities in order to escape my radical freedom. The meanings of these roles are constructed by the Other. In Western society, we all agree that a philosopher is someone who reads philosophy books, writes about philosophy, and is employed at a university. By myself, I cannot change the definition of a philosopher. The redefinition of the role has to be accepted by everyone. The same is true of social identities, such as 'woman' or 'working class'. What classifies someone as a woman or working class depends on a widespread tacit agreement. Therefore, when I reflect on myself as a woman, what this means will be defined by the Other.

However, at the same time as aiding my project to be conscious and have a fixed nature, the Other's Look also undermines my God-project. One way in which the Other's Look

[8] This is impure reflection, where I reflect on my character traits as fixed. For more on the distinction between pure and impure reflection, please see Chapter 2 (75-76).

threatens my God-project is that it reveals to me my freedom (Webber 2009, 123). This is why Sartre describes being the object of a Look as an 'alienation' (BN, 361).

At first, it is not clear why Sartre describes the Look as alienating if what I want is for the Other to confer upon me a fixed nature: 'I accept, and I want others to confer on me, a being that I recognise' (BN, 359). But becoming aware of myself as the object of the Other's Look reveals to me that the Other is a subject, capable of intending objects (BN, 483). As I am non-thetically aware that consciousness is radically free, then I am aware of the Other as radically free, too (BN, 359, 369, 376). Whether the Other judges me to be intelligent and I feel pride, or the Other judges me to be jealous and I feel ashamed, I am non-thetically aware that the only reason why his words 'reach me at my core' (BN , 308) is because he is a free consciousness (Webber 2009, 124). But, if the Other is free, then this suggests to me that I am free as well, as I also experience myself as an intentional consciousness. Recall that I have an extensional awareness of my own freedom, which I am continually trying to distract myself from in bad faith. When the Other's Look reveals that he is free, this extensional awareness of myself resurfaces. Therefore, the Other's freedom is an anti-value in my pursuit of the God-project (Webber 2009, 125).

The consequence of this is an endless circle of objectification (BN, 537-8). I need the Other to Look at me in order to acquire a nature that feels sufficiently 'fixed'. But, when the Other looks at me, I am reminded of my freedom, which prompts me to return his Look and make him into my object. But, as my object, the Other is not capable of giving me the fixed nature that I desire (BN, 394-5). Hence Sartre's claim that relations with others are conflictual. We can never coexist harmoniously with others because we ceaselessly oscillate between objectifying the Other and wanting to be objectified by the Other.

A second reason why the Look undermines my God-project is that the Other can give me a fixed nature that I do not like (Webber 2009, 125). This conflicts with the God-project in two ways. Firstly, I realise that I am free to reject the Other's evaluation and hence cannot have a fixed nature. Secondly, I grasp that human beings cannot have fixed natures because their behaviour can be interpreted in different ways—for example, the Other interprets my behaviour as lazy, whereas I experience my actions as 'overworked and stressed'.

I am always free to reject the Other's evaluation because consciousness is the negation of its object. When I posit myself in reflection as 'lazy', I am non-positionally aware of myself as not-being lazy. For this reason, Sartre claims that I cannot fully recognise myself in the qualities conferred upon me by the Other, such as lazy or 'wicked' (BN, 374). This object for the Other is me, but it is a me 'that is separated from me by an unbridgeable nothingness, because I am this me, but I am not this nothingness that separates me from myself'. 'My being-for-the-Other is a fall towards objectivity through an absolute void. And as this fall is an *alienation*, I cannot make myself be for myself as an object, because in no circumstance can I alienate myself from myself.' (BN, 374).

Consciousness fails to coincide with itself in reflection because it is always a non-positional awareness of itself as not-being the object that it posits. So I am always separated from any fixed nature that the Other gives me. This distance is why I am to negate any judgement of character that the Other gives me—when the Other calls me 'lazy', it is always possible for me to respond, 'that's not me'.

The realisation that human behaviour can be interpreted in different ways can be brought about in the case where the Other gives me a nature that does not reflect my behaviour. Suppose that I respond to the label of 'lazy' by working extra hard for the next month, but the Other still labels me 'lazy'. I feel conflicted. On one hand, I want my nature to feel like it is outside of my control ('I cannot help being lazy'). But, on the other hand, I want my nature to reflect my actual behaviour, otherwise it is an unconvincing candidate for a fixed nature. If my 'nature' seems unconnected to my real-life behaviour, then this casts doubt upon whether I really have a fixed nature at all. For this reason, I will never be completely satisfied with the nature conferred upon me by the Other. Even if the Other had perfect information about all of my actions and thoughts, I am a dynamic being whose qualities are changing all the time—yesterday, I was lazy and watched television instead of doing my work; today, I am too stressed and panicked to concentrate on my work. What I would really like is a dynamic fixed nature that could track the changes in my behaviour whilst remaining fixed. But this desire is a realisation that human beings cannot have fixed natures, because it betrays an awareness that my essence results from my behaviour and hence my freely chosen projects.

Therefore not only does the God-project fail because the Other's Look reveals to me my freedom, but also because seeking a fixed nature through the Other demonstrates the impossibility of my goal—to be conscious but with a fixed nature. I am unsatisfied with the fixed nature that I receive from the Other because it is *too* fixed—it cannot track changes in my behaviour. This is why Sartre describes the object that I am for the Other as a degraded consciousness:

> The object is what is not my consciousness and, in consequence, something that does not have the characteristics of consciousness, since the only existent

> that has the characteristics of consciousness for me is the consciousness that is mine. Thus the me-object-for-me is a me which is *not* me, i.e. a me that does not have the characteristics of consciousness. It is a *degraded* consciousness (BN, 372).

What Sartre is stating here is that I will never be able to fully identify with the fixed nature that the Other gives me because I am a consciousness, whereas the fixed nature is not conscious. Therefore my God-project cannot be fulfilled through the Other's Look.

In summary, I need the Other's Look for my fixed nature to feel appropriately 'fixed' but, at the same time, the Other's Look threatens my God-project. Firstly, the Other's evaluation of me reveals his freedom and hence my own. Secondly, if the Other gives me a fixed nature that I do not like, my rejection of it reveals my freedom. Thirdly, if the Other's judgement does not reflect my freedom, then this shows that I am a free being that cannot have a fixed nature, and that what I desire is a fixed nature that is conscious, which the Other's Look cannot give me.

Relations with Others: Romantic Love[9]

The previous section argued that we need the Other to pursue the God-project, but the Other also dooms the God-project to failure. I will now explore how the God-project is pursued in romantic love. Firstly, I outline the two primary attitudes that underpin all our concrete relations with others. Secondly, I explain the God-project of romantic love and why it is unsuccessful. Thirdly, I conclude by briefly summarising other possible relations with the Other.

[9] Sartre never explicitly states that he is talking about romantic love in *Being and Nothingness*. However, he refers to Tristan and Isolde to illustrate his argument (BN, 486), an example of romantic lovers. He later claims that his arguments would also apply to maternal love (BN, 536n30), which would suggest that he has not been talking about other types of love up until this point.

Sartre argues that we pursue the God-project in all of our real-life relations with the Other (BN, 480). As I explained earlier, I need the Look of the Other for my fixed nature, but the Look also reveals my freedom, leading me to objectify the Other. This cycle of objectification is reflected in what Sartre considers to be our two primary attitudes towards the Other. When the Other looks at me, I can try to 'retrieve this freedom and to take hold of it without taking its character of freedom away from it'. I aim to possess the Other's ability to make me into an object, in order to be 'my own foundation' (BN, 481). Alternatively, I can try to make the Other into an object, to take away his power to give me a nature.

But neither of these attitudes is successful, for each tends to slip into the other. The first attitude of trying to possess the Other's freedom is liable to objectify the Other. This is because I assert myself as a subject when I treat the Other as a means in my project of trying to possess his freedom. In the second attitude, there is a danger of recognising the subjectivity of the Other in this objectified freedom. Hence Sartre concludes that our relations with others are hopelessly circular: '[e]ach one of [the attitudes] is the other's death, which means that the failure of one of them motivates the adoption of the other. In this way my relations towards the Other are not dialectical, but circular…. [E]ach attempt lies within the other, and gives rise to the death of the other; thus we can never get out of the circle.' (BN, 482).

Romantic love is an example of the first primary attitude. The lover tries to capture the Other's power to objectify him in order to secure a fixed nature that is agreeable to him.[10] This is why the lover does not just wish to possess his beloved physically—he wants to possess a free conscious being (BN, 486). However, this project will ultimately end in failure, for the lover has contradictory desires. The Other needs to be free in order to give him a fixed nature, but he also wants to control the Other to guarantee that he receives a fixed nature to his liking. I shall describe four instances of the conflict between the lover's desires to preserve his beloved's freedom and otherness, and to possess and assimilate her. These conflicts that Sartre identifies continue to exist in modern-day relationships.

The first conflict that I shall discuss arises from the reciprocity of love: the lover wants to be loved by his beloved, and his beloved wants to be loved by the lover. I will first explain why Sartre thinks that to love is to wish to be loved, and then I shall explore the problems that this causes.

As a pursuit of the God-project, to love is to wish to be loved (BN, 496). It makes sense that, in romantic love, the lover should want his beloved to love him in return. If he did not, this would seem less like a case of romantic love and more like an unrequited infatuation. However, Sartre is not saying here that the lover wishes for his love to be reciprocated; rather, he is claiming that love is actually a self-focused project, where our goal is receiving, not giving, love. To love is to wish to be loved because the lover wishes to secure a fixed nature (BN, 496-7). Therefore, he does not want to be the subject who loves, but the object of love.

[10] In order to avoid confusion, I shall use the same pronouns for the lover and beloved as Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*.

But the lover does not want his beloved to experience him as a mere object amongst others. He wants to be the 'absolute centre of reference' for his beloved, 'around which all the implement things in the world are arranged as pure *means*' (BN, 489). All other objects gain their uses and meaning in relation to the Other. More than this, the lover wants to be the 'absolute value' for his beloved, the foundation of all her other values. She would betray her friends for him, steal for him, kill for him. As the absolute value, he is 'protected against any eventual devaluation'—he cannot be judged negatively, or abandoned for something more valuable, because he is outside and above all other values. The beloved's Look can no longer confer upon him a fixed nature that he does not like: 'I cannot be *seen* as ugly, or small, or cowardly' (BN, 490). Such judgements would be a 'factual limitation' of the lover's being, but the lover is above all other beings and values, so his actions can be understood only on their own terms.

This is how love pursues the God-project. The beloved gives her lover a fixed nature as the absolute value and centre of meaning in the universe, such that he is no longer in danger of being judged negatively. The beloved freely devotes herself to the lover, but he guarantees her continued devotion by becoming the limit of her freedom—all of her projects have a meaning in relation to him (BN, 489). If he manages to achieve this, then the lover will experience 'love's joy', which is to rejoice in one's existence being justified (BN, 491).

However, Sartre argues that the lover's project is inevitably unsuccessful. The lover wishes to be loved by his beloved but, because to love is to wish to be loved, if his beloved loves him, then she too wishes to be loved (BN, 499). If the beloved wants the lover to love her, then she no longer experiences the lover as an object but a subject, and she wants to be the

object of his love. But the lover wants to be object of love because it is only through being objectified that he can gain a fixed nature. Sartre describes this as an 'infinite referral' that results in the lovers' 'constant dissatisfaction' and is the first destruction of love.

Sartre's argument can be spelled out more concretely in terms of devotion. In the God-project, to love is to wish to be loved because the lover wants his beloved to be completely devoted to him. The lover desires an unconditional love, as the beloved's absolute value. He does not want to compete with her interests or other relationships; he wants to be her top priority. If he could secure her complete devotion, then there would be no danger of her giving him a fixed nature not to his liking.

However, it is impossible for the lover to have his beloved's complete devotion. Firstly, as explained above, love is an infinite referral—the beloved also wants to be worshipped by the lover. Her love is premised on the condition of his complete devotion to her. Therefore her love can never be perfectly unconditional.

This is why Sartre claims that love cannot be reciprocal. 'The love that is hereby demanded from the other cannot *ask for* anything: it is a pure commitment, without reciprocity.' (BN, 496). But, in concrete relations, the Other is always trying to do to me what I am trying to do her (BN, 482). The result of this is that neither of us feel satisfied and that '[c]onflict is the original meaning of being-for-the-Other.' (BN, 483).

The second reason why complete devotion is impossible is because the lover cannot always be his beloved's top priority. She will have other interests and commitments. If she did not, then this seems to undermine her status as a free human being or an 'Other'; she becomes

more like the lover's mechanical slave. In fact, this is the only way that the lover could guarantee his beloved's complete devotion—by taking away her freedom. But as the lover aims to possess a freedom as a freedom, this would spell the end for his God-project. This leads us to the second conflict of love: the desire for love to be freely given and the desire for love to be secure.

Although the lover wants to preserve his beloved's freedom, he also wants to guarantee that she will not fall out of love with him. Love must be freely given for him to fulfil his God-project—only a free conscious being can make him into an absolute value. But, at the same time, the lover wants assurance that his beloved will not fall out of love with him and either forget about him or give him a fixed nature not to his liking (BN, 499). Below, I discuss the conflict between freedom and security in further detail.

The lover wants love to be freely given. Suppose that the beloved was coerced—then it would be unlikely that she makes him into the absolute value and centre of meaning. Furthermore, if the lover were to coerce the beloved, he would be acting as a subject, but the aim of his project is to be her object, so that he can receive a fixed nature.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre argues that the lover does not want to be loved by an 'automatism'. 'He does not want to become the object of a boundless, mechanical passion.' (BN, 486). The lover is not satisfied with a non-conscious, automatically given love, because then the beloved would be unable to give him a fixed nature. Sartre adds that the lover would not be happy with a love produced by a love potion. Again, a potion would take away the beloved's ability to give him a fixed nature as valuable and important. The lover needs the beloved to freely choose to value him: 'if you want to humiliate him you need only portray

for him his loved one's passion as the outcome of psychological determinism: the lover will feel devalued in his love and his being.' Furthermore, as discussed above, one's fixed nature has to accurately reflect one's behaviour in order to feel real. Therefore it needs to come from a free being who is responsive to how one acts.

For these reasons, the lover wants love to be freely given and not determined. However, he is also unhappy with love that is given as a 'free and voluntary commitment' (BN, 486). Firstly, if love is a 'sworn faith', then the beloved loves him only because she does not want to break her promise (BN, 487). Secondly, as long as love is freely given, there is always a risk that the beloved will fall out of love. Sartre identifies this as the second destruction of love and the reason for the lover's constant insecurity (BN, 499). If the beloved falls out of love, then the lover no longer has a fixed nature as the absolute value and centre of reference. Because she is radically free, even if she swears to him now that she will love him forever, she cannot prevent herself from freely choosing to leave him in the future. This reveals the lover's dependence on his beloved. He cannot be the absolute condition of her freedom, because his status as such is dependent upon her continued free choice to love him.

Therefore, the lover desires a love that is both free and determined: he 'wants the other's freedom to determine itself by itself to become love' (BN, 487). But it is impossible for love to be both free and determined, and hence the project of love fails.

The lover desires love to be both free and determined in another sense besides security: he wants the love to be determined in the sense of predestination—the lovers were 'made for each other' (BN, 491). One reason why the lovers want their love to have been predestined is that the possibility of not having met is terrifying. This possibility is terrifying to the extent

that love is successful in establishing each as the centre of the Other's world. If everything in the world has a meaning that relates to the lover, then the beloved's whole world would have been different had they not met.

In addition, lovers feel that their love would be degraded if it were the result of a chance meeting. Lovers reject the idea that their beloved could have met someone else and have been equally happy. Therefore they claim to be each other's soulmates. Their love was determined by fate or by God.

As well as believing that he was destined for his beloved, the lover wants to deny that he was chosen amongst others. His beloved could not have even considered any other lovers. He does not want it to be possible for her to compare him to other men, for her to judge him better or worse than them. This desire leads to what Sartre considers to be the third destruction of love (BN, 499). Sartre states that lovers are secretive about their relationship because their love is made relative and contingent by the presence of other people. When these other human beings, 'the third person' (BN, 498), look at the lovers, the lovers can no longer regard each other as the absolute source of meaning and value in the world. Each lover realises that they exist in a world of other people, for whom their beloved is not important. Even if the third person is not factually present, the lovers are still conscious of existing for the internalised Other. Hence the lovers' 'constant shame' (BN, 499).

These are the reasons why lovers want their love to have been determined, in the sense of having been predestined. However, a love that is determined is a love that is not free. As described above, the lovers also want their love to have been founded on a free choice. Only

the beloved's free choice can make the lover into the absolute value. Again, the lover has conflicting desires—he wants love to be free, but also to have been determined.

The final problem for love is the conflict between the desire for the beloved to be the same, which in the extreme case is a desire to merge with the beloved, and the desire for the beloved to remain different and ontologically separate.

The lover wants his beloved to be the same as him for a number of reasons. Firstly, he does not want his beloved to disagree with him. He would like them to live together in perfect harmony because, if the lovers disagree, then this reveals the insecurity of their love. Secondly, the lover wants his beloved to share his views, hobbies, and interests. Not only would this reduce their disagreements, but also he would no longer have to compete for his beloved's affections. As described above, the lover is seeking his beloved's complete devotion.

If the desire for sameness is carried to its full conclusion, then the lover wants to fuse with his beloved (BN, 497). This explains the enduring myth of romantic love as a union, a merging of two souls. Lovers speak in a fantasy where fusion has already taken place—'I hear your voice in my head', 'I knew you would say that', *et cetera*. If the lover could fuse with his beloved, then he would be better able to control what his beloved thinks of him. Then he could guarantee that his beloved regards him as the absolute value. As two separate subjects, it is always possible for him to doubt whether she really loves him (BN, 488-9)

However, at the same time, the lover wants his beloved to be different from him. He needs the Other to remain Other in order to pursue his God-project. He can only acquire a fixed

nature that feels sufficiently 'fixed' from the Other who is outside of his control. Hence love desires a fusion, but a fusion 'in which each one would preserve its alterity in order to found the other.' (BN, 497). This is impossible—the lovers cannot fuse whilst each retains their alterity (BN, 485).

If the beloved had completely the same views and interests as the lover, then loving her would be like loving oneself, and not a case of genuine romantic love. What the lover wants is for another freedom to love him. We can observe this in real-life romantic relationships. What lovers love about each other is the ways in which they differ from each other. When the lover says, 'I love her because she is so clever', he does not add, 'just like me'. He loves her because she is cleverer than him, or clever in a different way to him.

In any case, it is impossible for two subjects to fuse and form a joint subject, according to Sartre. Sartre dismisses all supposed experiences of what he calls the 'We-subject' (BN, 557). He argues that a 'We' is not a genuine ontological relation, but rather the psychological experience of a single consciousness; one individual's subjective interpretation of their relation to the Other's freedom (BN, 545). A joint subject is ontologically impossible because two subjects cannot share the same experience and remain two separate subjects—rather, they would form just one single subject (Ch. 2, 70- 71; BN, 562).

In summary, love is doomed to failure because it gives rise to conflicting desires. The lover wants to preserve the beloved's Otherness and difference from him but, at the same time, desires to possess and assimilate her. He wants the beloved to be completely devoted to him, so reciprocity is love's downfall.

The failure of romantic love might prompt the lover to adopt an attitude of masochism instead. The aim of love is to capture the beloved's freedom in order to secure a fixed nature as valuable and important, but masochism is satisfied with any fixed nature, positive or negative (Webber 2009, 138-9). However, masochism is also unsuccessful in its pursuit of the God-project. The masochist attempts to be an object for the Other, but his attempt to be an object is a freely chosen project: '…the masochist who pays a woman to whip him is treating her as an instrument and thereby places himself in a relation of transcendence to her. Thus the masochist ends up treating the other as an object...' (BN, 501). The masochist asserts himself as a subject through engaging the Other in his project. He treats her as a means, his object.

In general, if I try to gain a fixed nature through the Other's freedom, I end up making the Other into my instrument. I thereby assert my freedom and transcend my fixed nature. Thus the first primary attitude towards the Other fails. The failure of the first attitude can lead one to adopt the second attitude, which aims to make the Other into an object to remove her ability to give one a fixed nature that one does not like. This project fails because my very project to strip the Other of her power to objectify me reveals my awareness of her radical freedom. She compels me to recognise her subjectivity with her Look. The failure of the second attitude leads one to return to the first attitude, and so the cycle continues (BN, 513).

Therefore, in Sartre's view, all of our concrete relations with others fail. Whilst we might not agree with Sartre's pessimistic conclusion, we can certainly recognise elements of modern-day relationships in his discussion of the features of bad faith love. As Kate Kirkpatrick points out, the criterion for correctness in phenomenology is that we can recognise something in the description that relates to our own experience. I have tried to

spell out Sartre's arguments in terms of tensions familiar to romantic relationships. As long as we continue to recognise these tensions in our own relationships, then Sartre's account of romantic love should not be rejected (Kirkpatrick 2017b).

Authentic Love

Having discussed the bad faith love of *Being and Nothingness*, I will spend the remainder of this chapter outlining Sartre's conception of authentic love. As we saw earlier, Sartre claims that his description of concrete relations with others does not rule out a 'morality of deliverance and salvation', but 'this can be achieved only after a radical conversion' (BN 543n34).[11] This remark confirms that Sartre has so far analysed only bad faith relations with others and that relations which are not in bad faith are possible. Sartre examines such relations in his unfinished work on morality, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, written between 1947 and 1948 and published posthumously. In the *Notebooks*, Sartre moves away from his previous view that all relations with others are conflictual and instead argues that it is possible to have authentic relations with others. In this section, I will begin by defining authenticity, before describing authentic relations in general and authentic love in particular.

Earlier, I defined authenticity as the opposite of bad faith. As bad faith seeks to flee the human condition, I argued that authenticity embraces the human condition. This seems to be Sartre's view his most famous definition of authenticity, which can be found in *Anti-Semite and Jew*. An authentic exercise of freedom consists in being accurately aware of one's situation and accepting the responsibility entailed by one's radical freedom (ASJ, 90).

[11] I will discuss the radical conversion in Chapter 2, 74.

By itself, this definition does not tell us much about what authentic relations with others are like. But we can add from *Being and Nothingness* that in authentic relations the Other is revealed to us as both subject and object. Sartre says that this would be the only way to escape the endless cycle of bad faith attitudes towards the Other (BN, 537-8). In *Being and Nothingness*, he claims that this relation is impossible. But, in the *Notebooks*, it is possible to grasp the Other as a subject and object at once through comprehension. Comprehension, then, is a necessary condition for authentic relations with the Other (NE, 276).

The idea of comprehension is foreshadowed in *Being and Nothingness* (NE, 276n222). Here, Sartre says that it is the Look that is our primary encounter with the Other (BN, 348). In the Look, one becomes aware of the Other as subject through being aware of oneself as the object of the Other's consciousness. Due to widespread bad faith, one experiences oneself as a particular kind of object for the Other—one with a fixed nature.

However, Sartre describes an alternative, secondary, form of awareness of the Other. This is apprehending the Other as an object. Sartre gives an example of a man walking in the park. I am the perceiving subject and the man is the object of my perception, but he does not appear to me like another object in the world, such as a bench. Instead, I perceive him as a new centre of intentionality. He introduces a new organisation of my world. Distances span from him—the lawn is 2.20 metres away from him (BN, 349; 351). The Other's presence introduces an absence into my world—a flight of all my objects towards the Other as a perceiving consciousness. As such, the Other is not just an inert object among others; I recognise him as a subject. If the Other was a doll, I would not perceive him in this way. However, the man is still the object of my perception (BN, 351); rather, 'we are handling a specific type of objectivity' (BN, 352). Sartre appears to be drawing a distinction between

being the object of a perception and ontologically being an object—a material existent (Lopato 2016, 198n8). The Other is the object of my Look but he is not ontologically an object. But viewing each other as this 'specific type of objectivity' recognises our radical freedom, and so undermines our projects to have fixed natures. Therefore, most of the time, we view each other as and pretend to be mere objects for the Look.

In the *Notebooks*, the idea of apprehending the Other as this specific type of objectivity resurfaces as 'comprehension' (NE, 276-7). In comprehension, the Other is the object of my perception, but I grasp his situated freedom through his pursuit of a goal (NE, 283). It is therefore an experience of the Other as an ambiguous being, because his freedom is grasped through his objecthood (NE, 285). Sartre claims that the occasion of comprehension is the appeal, in which the other person asks me for help (NE, 274). The person appealing considers my situation and addresses me as a free subject to help him. At the same time, I grasp his situated freedom through understanding his project and his goal. I apprehend his goal through his concrete actions. His goal is freely chosen, so it reveals his freedom (NE, 277). If I help him, then I no longer merely perceive his goal, but take it up. However, I do not try to appropriate the Other's goal; I do not try to achieve that goal for myself. Instead, I pursue the end of the Other achieving this goal and not me. If so, then I do not objectify the Other by making him my means (NE, 276-9).

In this way, comprehension removes the conflict of the Look: 'I am put in such a position that I *recognise* the other's freedom without being pierced [by] a look.' (NE, 279). I recognise the Other as a free subject not through experiencing myself as an object, but through comprehending the Other's goal. Because the Other recognises that I want him to achieve the end that he is currently pursuing, his freedom 'does not distinguish itself from

me in terms of *conflict*, that is, through an opposition where each For-itself denies that it is the Other and constitutes the other as an object...' (NE, 280). Non-conflictual relations with the Other become possible.

Alongside recognising freedom, the appeal apprehends the Other's material existence. Sartre gives an example of a person who is late for the bus who is helped on board by another passenger. In order to do this, the helper must acknowledge the Other as a material body, for she must brace herself to haul him onto the bus. In return, the passenger who is late must recognise the helper's material existence when he judges how to grasp her hand to pull himself up. For this reason, comprehension is not just a recognition of the Other's objecthood in terms of the Other being the object of perception, but it is also an appreciation of the Other as an embodied, material being. Therefore, comprehension in the appeal is an awareness of the Other as an ambiguous being (NE, 285).

The help provided in the appeal is gratuitous (NE, 283). The helper is under no obligation to help, and the person who asks for help recognises this. Therefore the appeal is a gift (NE, 281). The helper offers her freedom and body to help the Other to achieve his end, without reason or justification, or expecting anything in return. But to appeal to the Other is also a gift. The Other offers up his goal and trusts that it will not be appropriated. He runs the risk that his freedom will not be comprehended and he will be objectified (NE, 282). He promises that if I appeal to him, my help will be reciprocated (NE, 284).

As a gift, recognition of the Other's freedom is generous (NE, 281). The person who asks for help is generous insofar as they present their free project to the Other and appeal to them

as a freedom. The helper is also generous, in apprehending the freedom of the Other and helping them to achieve their project without appropriating it for themselves.

In summary, mutual comprehension of ambiguity is a feature of all authentic relations with others. I will now describe authentic love in general, before moving on to authentic romantic love.

In the *Notebooks*, Sartre directly addresses the question of 'authentic love' (NE, 501, 508), but he does not specify what kind of love he is describing. Sometimes, it seems as if he is concerned with romantic love (NE, 488, 501-2); at other times, he seems to be referring to some conception of fraternal love that exists between members with a common cause (NE, 491, 508). One type of love which Sartre seems to exclude is disinterested, altruistic love (*agape*). This is because his account of love focuses on bestowing value on the particular loved one, whereas *agape* bestows value on all mankind.

As in all authentic relations, authentic love comprehends the Other as an ambiguous being, as both a freedom and a material existent. However, authentic love also bestows value on the beloved's material being as the vehicle of his freedom. To bestow value is different from appraising value (Singer 2009). To appraise value is to judge someone to be valuable according to a pre-existing standard, whereas to bestow value is to create value. In authentic love, I create the value that is possessed by the Other's material existence. Furthermore, I value the Other in their particularity. I do not love my friend just because he is funny, for there will always exist another person who is funnier. Rather, what I love is the particular humour of my friend. I do not just appraise the value of his wit; I create it as valuable.

In authentic love, it is not threatening to be the object of a Look. This is because, firstly, the Other comprehends my freedom through my objectivity and, secondly, the Other values my material existence. The Look of the Other makes me aware of myself as a situated, material being in a shared world. Thus the Other grants me a 'new dimension of Being'—my being as an object (NE, 499). This is 'a fall or a threat' only if 'the Other refuses to see a freedom in me *too*.' But, if the Other 'makes me exist as an existing freedom as well as a *Being/object*' (if he comprehends me as a freedom whilst I am his object), then 'he enriches the world and me' (NE, 500). He enriches the world for me by bringing an extra meaning to my existence, on top of the subjective meaning I give it myself.

Secondly, the Other's Look reveals me as embodied and therefore vulnerable (NE, 501). But the authentic lover makes it his project to protect the Other's body: 'I […] make myself the guardian of [the Other's] finitude. In my freedom his finitude finds safety: I am the one who watches his back and who deflects from his back the danger he cannot see' (NE, 508). I wish to protect the Other's fragility because it is the vehicle of their freedom. By making it the end of my project to protect the Other's material existence, his material existence is given value. 'But, furthermore, if I want the project to be realized by a man, this is because I want it to be a victory over fragility. So I assume this fragility. It becomes *precious*. In the terms of classical ethics, I will say that it has a value.' (NE, 507).

Sartre emphasises that this is the key feature of authentic love: revealing the vulnerable material existence of the Other and protecting it so that his freedom can overcome it:

> Here we are able to understand what *loving* signifies in its authentic sense. I love if I *create* the contingent finitude of the Other as being-within-the-world… Through me *there is* a vulnerability of the Other, but I will this vulnerability since he surpasses it and it has to be there so that he can surpass

> it…. Thus one will love the gauntness, the nervousness of this politician or that doctor, who pushes aside and overcomes this thin, nervous body and *forgets* it…. To unveil the other in his being-within-the-world is to love him in his body. (NE, 501)

To embrace the Other's material existence in this way is 'generous', according to Juliette Simont (1992). I generously make the free choice to reveal new dimensions of the Other's being and to value her body. Loving the Other's body gives contingent material existence a meaning—it is that which I love and therefore has value (NE, 506-7). I thereby save the Other from the inertia and contingency of the in-itself by making her facticity a 'being-for(-others)'; I give her object-like existence a meaning through my freedom (NE, 508, cf. BN 491).

Authentic love rejects the project of bad faith love, which seeks to appropriate the Other's freedom. Instead, authentic love aims to unveil and create. 'It is first of all an unveiling/creator: here too, in pure generosity,… the Other's *qualitie*s appear, which can only exist *for me* and through my own upsurge. For example, the other *becomes* witty if I exist. He cannot be witty for himself.' (NE, 507). As in *Being and Nothingness*, it is the Other who confers qualities upon me. Unveiling the Other's qualities is the aim of authentic love. 'Here is an original structure of authentic love…: to unveil the Other's being within the absolute; to *rejoice* in it without appropriating it; to give it safety in terms of my freedom, and to surpass it only in the direction of the Other's ends.' (NE, 508).

So far, I have described authentic love in general. I will now set out Sartre's conception of authentic romantic love, although Sartre himself does not make this distinction in the *Notebooks*. It is difficult to define authentic romantic love, for it includes elements of friendship, companionship, and familial feeling, as well as sexual desire. Therefore

everything that I have said about authentic love in general also applies to authentic romantic love. But, in romantic love, the body is also valued in itself.

> Consider this dancer, at first she is the *dance*, yet the trembling of her breasts is not the dance, it is a kind of inertia….Beneath her project I catch sight of an order of life and beneath this order of life I catch a glimpse of the order of Being, without ever *reaching* it. In this way, then, I reveal a quite unusual type of object: the pink of these cheeks, the shine in these eyes, the curve of this nose which are part of the *there is* only by way of me. (NE, 502).

In this quote, Sartre claims that the lover can fleetingly grasp the pure Being of his beloved's body, underneath the organised movements of her projects. Since we saw earlier that love involves loving the Other in their body, the lover must also embrace this pure Being that he glimpses. He must love the beloved in her totality.

Loving the beloved in her totality includes valuing the involuntary sides to her material existence. Sartre emphasises this in a later interview:

> In the Hell described in *Being and Nothingness* love was only the desire to be loved. . . . But I have never had the occasion to describe positive love . . . except in the *Saint Genet* where, on the contrary, I explained that it was not at all a fact of death, but a fact of life and that love was the acceptance of the total person—including his viscera.[12]

Loving the Other in her total person means that I accept the beloved's bodily functions and all of the aspects of her body that she is usually publicly ashamed of—and make them no longer shameful.

[12] Jeanson (1974, 232) cited in Simont (1992, 194).

To reveal one's material existence to the Other in this way is to share a particular kind of honesty with them. Again, in a later interview, Sartre suggests that we only yield our thoughts to those to whom we yield our bodies (1977, 11). Reciprocal bodily intimacy will lead to emotional and cognitive intimacy.

In all other types of love, material existence is valued as a vehicle of freedom. I value the Other's body because he is an embodied freedom. But romantic lovers value the body in itself. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the body is valued as desirable and attractive in the erotic encounter, where the lovers live out the ambiguity of their bodies and the self/other distinction. In the erotic encounter, material existence is a gift that lovers offer to each other (Bergoffen 1997).

In summary, authentic love bestows value on the Other's body as a necessary condition his freedom and values the Other as a particular being. Romantic love additionally values the body in itself, unveiling it as desirable and attractive. However, we now face a puzzle. I concluded the previous section by arguing that we can recognise Sartre's account of bad faith love in our own lives. But, in the *Notebooks*, Sartre claims that authentic love is possible. If we want to reject Sartre's pessimistic conclusions in *Being and Nothingness*, and instead endorse his account of authentic love, do we have to abandon Sartre's claim that bad faith is widespread throughout society? This thesis argues that we do not; I will show that authentic romantic love is possible as a rare exception to bad faith, whilst at the same time maintaining that we are socialised into bad faith as children.

Chapter 2. The Communication Argument and the Conversion Argument

In the previous chapter, I presented Sartre's argument that bad faith is widespread throughout society. Relations with others are no exception, including love, which is a pursuit of the God-project and therefore doomed to failure. I suggested that there are aspects of Sartre's account of bad faith love that we can recognise in our own relationships. However, most of us would reject Sartre's conclusion that all love is doomed to failure. In the *Notebooks*, Sartre himself provides us with a description of authentic love that we can also identify with. Thus we are faced with a puzzle: if there is widespread bad faith, how can authentic love be possible?

This chapter discusses two possible solutions to this problem: what I shall call the 'communication argument' and the 'conversion argument'. Both responses hope to show that authentic love is practically possible—not only is it possible in theory, but also it actually exists within our society. But ultimately I find that neither proposed solution is successful. By itself, the communication argument cannot resolve the fundamental conflict that arises with the Look. The conversion argument fails because the radical conversion is impossible. In the remaining chapters, I will present my own argument for the possibility of authentic love.

The Communication Argument

The communication argument claims that it is possible to be aware of the Other as a subject whilst remaining a subject oneself through communication—in other words, in communication, it is possible to comprehend the Other. Therefore, communication is an authentic relation to the Other.

I shall examine two versions of the communication argument: the first based on written communication, and the second based on verbal communication. The written form of the communication argument is made by Sartre in *What is Literature?*, where he argues that the relation between reader and writer is authentic. I will begin by examining this version of the communication argument, before considering the argument from verbal communication, and finally evaluating both versions.

Written Communication in *What is Literature?*

In *What is Literature?,* Sartre argues that the relation between reader and writer is authentic. Reading and writing are joint projects that require the free participation of two subjects, who each recognise that the other is free. Therefore, reading and writing are cases of mutual comprehension. I explained in the last chapter that all authentic relations with the Other involve a mutual comprehension of both self and Other as ambiguous beings. This section will first explain why reading and writing are joint projects and therefore an authentic relation to the Other, and then I will discuss how this grounds the possibility of authentic love.[13]

[13] I will use the pronoun 'he' to refer to writer and reader, to avoid confusion with the quoted text.

According to Sartre, prose writing (specifically, novel writing) is a form of communication; it aims to deliver a message (WL, 18). The 'committed' writer writes to communicate a message about social injustice to his readers (WL, 61). He tries to prompt his audience to reflect upon their lives (WL, 57). The writer does this by disclosing the world to his reader in order to show how the world might be changed (WL, 45). Hence Sartre describes prose writing as 'action by disclosure' (WL, 14).

Reading both discloses the writer's message within the text and contributes to its meaning. Hence reading is both disclosure and creation: '…the reader is conscious of disclosing in creating, of creating by disclosing' (WL, 31). In prose writing, words do not simply exist as they are written on the page or as sounds spoken out loud, but point beyond themselves as signs that must be taken up by the reader. The writer guides the reader: 'if he describes a hovel, [he can] make it seem the symbol of social injustice and provoke your indignation.' (WL, 4). But bringing to mind the imaginary world of the text is a joint effort (WL, 31). Reading is therefore directed creation (WL, 33).

In order for the reader to be able to participate in the text's creation, he must be free. Only a free consciousness can bestow meaning and value. Thus the novel is an 'appeal' to the reader's freedom (WL, 33-34). The writer cannot address the reader's freedom 'by means of constraint, fascination, or entreaties', but only by recognising that freedom as a freedom and having 'confidence' in it (WL, 34). 'Confidence' is the trust that the writer has that the reader will engage his freedom when reading—he will not scroll through the text mindlessly or be led by emotion. In return, the writer requires that his readers reciprocate this confidence in his own freedom—'that they recognise his creative freedom, and that they in turn solicit it by a symmetrical and inverse appeal' (WL, 38). The author's freedom is inscribed in the

events of the novel. If the reader sees the scenes in the work as causally related, he will surmise that a freedom has created this book—that the book was not written in a fit of passion (WL, 40-41).

Sartre describes the relation of confidence between two freedoms as a 'pact'. This pact is 'generous' because it is freely entered into (WL, 41). The pact of mutual confidence between reader and writer begins a dialectic where reader and writer demand more and more of each other's freedom: 'when I read, I make demands; if my demands are met, what I am then reading provokes me to demand more of the author, which means to demand of the author that he demand more of me. And, vice versa…' (WL, 41). The reader demands for a story that appeals to his freedom; the writer demands to be read by a freedom. Through this dialectic, both freedoms are revealed: 'Thus, my freedom, by revealing itself, reveals the freedom of the other.' (WL, 41).

In appealing to another freedom, the writer wills his reader to be free. To adopt a project of willing his reader's freedom is to value freedom. Furthermore, the writer does not just value the freedom of his actual audience, but of all possible readers—the whole of mankind. Reading is a pact between two freedoms. All humans are potentially able to experience the same aesthetic joy in reading. So Sartre extrapolates that reading is a pact between all freedoms (WL, 44-45). If the writer wills the freedom of his actual reader, then he must be committed to the concrete liberation of all human beings (WL, 47). He aims to combat social injustice and oppression by revealing it to his readers.

Sartre states that the reader-writer relation is a step towards the 'city of ends', where all human beings will be respected as free subjects. This is because both reader and writer

participate in the creation of the world of the novel, so they take joint responsibility for it. Therefore, the universe disclosed by their joint effort is one shot through with a 'freedom which has taken human freedom as its end, and if it is not really the city of ends that it ought to be, it must at least be a stage along the way' (WL, 46).

The relation between reader and writer is authentic. In Chapter 1, I claimed that an authentic exercise of freedom consists in being aware of one's situation and accepting the responsibility entailed by one's freedom (ASJ, 90). The reader and writer both meet this definition of authenticity. First of all, both reader and writer take joint responsibility for creating the world of the novel. Furthermore, Sartre emphasises that the freedom he has been concerned with in *What is Literature?* is an embodied, situated one: '*Being situated* is an essential and necessary characteristic of my freedom.' (WL, 115). One way in which the writer is situated is that he cannot occupy a view from nowhere; he must write for his contemporary audience. '[The committed writer] has given up the impossible dream of giving an impartial picture of Society and the human condition.' (WL, 14). The appeal between the writer and reader is an appeal to situated freedom. Therefore, both reader and writer recognise their situations.

In Chapter 1, I stated that the Other is revealed as both subject and object in authentic relations, as this is the only way to escape the endless cycle of objectification (BN, 537-8). According to the *Notebooks*, this is possible through comprehension (NE, 276). The occasion of comprehension is the appeal (NE, 274), and prose-writing is a mutual appeal to each other's freedom. Both reader and writer must engage their freedom to communicate the message. Furthermore, as described above, both reader and writer recognise each other's freedom in situation. The writer reveals to his readers their situation and themselves, so that

they may be able to change things (WL, 13). His power to objectify is not intended to alienate, but to appeal to the reader's freedom in order to change the world—specifically, to end social injustice. Thus the Look is no longer a threat in the reader-writer relationship.

In return, the reader does not objectify the writer's goal. He recognises its source in another freedom. But he gives the writer's goal an 'outside' by witnessing it (NE, 506). Whilst the novel was unread, the writer's project existed for-itself. Comprehended by another subject, the project acquires qualities and comes to exist in the intersubjective world (WL, 28-30).

In the *Notebooks,* Sartre states that one takes up the goal of the Other only in order to help the Other achieve it (NE, 276-9; 508). Similarly, in written communication, the reader takes up the writer's goal in order to enact the change in the world that the writer sought to secure. In return, the writer does not conceive of the reader as a means to his ends, for example, manipulating his emotions like things-in-themselves; instead, he addresses the reader's freedom (WL, 36).

In Chapter 1, I identified generosity as a key feature of authentic relations with others. As we have seen, written communication is generous. The reader offers his situated freedom as a gift in generosity to the writer (WL, 37). The reader has no duty to read the book, but freely takes up the book as his task. His gift is to give himself over to the work of the writer. He suspends his critical faculties and renders himself credulous (WL, 36); he makes himself passive whilst remaining conscious of being free. His emotional reactions originate in his freedom (WL, 37).

The writer reciprocates the reader's generosity. He offers himself as a generous gift through his work. His facticity and situated freedom are revealed to the reader through his novel, the work of art. '[T]he contemplation of the work of art allows us to grasp how I can apprehend the Other's goal…. I suddenly discover the total contingency, the absolute fragility, the finitude, and the mortality of the one who is proposing this goal to himself.' (NE, 500-1). Art is a 'gift', given from author to reader (WL, 39). Through grasping the writer's project to effect social change, the reader comes into contact with the writer's contingency and finitude.

So far, I have suggested that the relation between reader and writer is authentic. However, more specifically, one could describe the relationship as one of authentic love. This is not a case of authentic romantic love, as the body is not valued in itself as attractive and desirable. But it could be a case of fraternal love. Since we read books by committed writers even in our bad faith society, this would show that authentic love is practically possible. The reader-writer relationship could be considered a relationship of authentic love because there is a gift of the whole person in their particularity. The body is revealed as the vehicle of freedom.

Sartre states that the exchange between reader and writer has a bodily dimension. Admittedly, this is limited since the two embodied freedoms are only in remote contact with each other. The reader makes a gift to the writer of his 'whole person, with his passions, his prepossessions, his sympathies, his sexual temperament, and his scale of values' (WL, 37)—in other words, his embodied particularity. This is because he engages his whole being—all of his experiences—to disclose and create the writer's message. The reader and writer reveal each other as situated—and, to 'unveil the other in his being-within-the-world is to love him in his body.' (NE, 501).

Sartre explicitly claims that the reader can love the writer. He claims that the reader can respond to the text with 'generous love', which is a 'promise to maintain' (WL, 46). The reader promises to maintain the universe of the writer.

Verbal Communication

I shall now present the second version of the communication argument which asserts that authentic relations with others are realised through verbal communication.[14] The claim is that conversation is a joint project which reveals the listener as a subject whilst simultaneously maintaining the subjectivity of the speaker, which results in a relationship of reciprocal recognition and respect.

Like prose writing, speech within conversation has two functions: to communicate a message, and to disclose the world. Words in conversation are used as signs to signify a meaning beyond themselves, which communicates a message. The speaker also discloses a new aspect of the world to the listener, including in cases where the experience is shared. For example, suppose that a male colleague and I spoke at the same conference. I can disclose how it felt for me, as a woman, to present, revealing new aspects of our joint situation that were not initially available to him as a man.

In conversation, both speaker and listener express their subjectivity without negating the subjectivity of the Other. In this way, they escape the oscillation between subject and object

[14] See Martinot (2005), Heter (2006a), and Van der Wielen (2014) for versions of the argument from verbal communication.

resulting from the Look (Martinot 2005, 58-59). The speaker addresses the listener as another free subject. Just like Sartre claims that one does not write for slaves (WL, 48), one does not speak for those who are incapable of free response. One might occasionally chatter to some inanimate object, such as a figurine or toy that has become a mascot, or a slow computer that struggles to load but, phenomenologically, this feels different from the kind of speech directed at conscious beings. The possible response does not have to be verbal; what matters is the comprehension of the listener. Consider the difference between saying pleasant things to a teddy bear and to a dog, where the dog wags her tail in reaction to the words. Speech in conversation is performed in expectation of the possibility of a response.

The speaker addresses the listener as a subject, but this does not entail that the speaker is transformed into the listener's object. He continues to assert himself as a subject. To speak is the function of a subject, and to be heard is to be recognised as a subject. Furthermore, when the listener responds to him, he constitutes the speaker as a subject through his own expectation of response (Martinot 2005, 56). For these reasons, verbal communication is a case of mutual comprehension.

Conversation is a joint project because each participant requires the cooperation of the other in order to complete his own act. The speaker aims at the listener's comprehension, and therefore he requires the listener's free subjectivity. At the same time, the listener acknowledges the subjectivity of the speaker, as he only cares about the noises emanating from the speaker's mouth because he recognises them to originate from another free subject. Because each depends upon the other's cooperation for the completion of his own project, the mutual dependency between speaker and listener entails a relation of mutual respect

(Heter 2006a, 32-33). Combined with reciprocal comprehension, this constitutes an authentic relation to the Other.

Sartre himself recognises the potential of conversation for bringing about an authentic relation with the Other. In *Hope Now*, his 1980 interviews with Benny Lévy, Sartre describes himself and Lévy as creating a new thought together in conversation that neither of them had previously thought before. 'What our collaboration brings to me are plural thoughts that we have formed together, which constantly yield me something new even though, a priori, I agree with their whole content.' (HN, 74). He suggests that conversation is superior to literature in this sense. Writing bears the marks of the author only, and then the anonymous readers must formulate these thoughts for themselves, more or less successfully (HN, 73). Conversation, however, allows for a meeting of minds where the resulting thoughts are jointly authored.

The authentic relation between speaker and listener enables relations of authentic love. Near the beginning of the *Notebooks*, Sartre suggests that communication is or at least involves love. He is referring to a fraternal form of love which is threatened by the presence of oppression (NE, 9). He adds that love, as communication, is 'to have the other in oneself'. One has the Other in oneself in conversation. One way of defining what it is to be a subject is that it is to be a point of view onto the world. It takes other existents in the world as its objects. This definition seems to fit with Sartre's conception of the subject in *Being and Nothingness*. For example, he describes the Other as a point of view that intrudes into my world. Upon encountering another person in the park, all the objects that were previously for-me appear to orient around the Other, as I perceive him to be another centre of possibilities (BN, 349-51). However, in speech, it is possible to have the Other's own point

of view within oneself (Van der Wielen 2014, 62). In conversation, the Other expresses his perspective and, because we both remain subjects, our worldviews collide.

Like the reader, the listener offers his freedom to the speaker as a generous gift. He receives the speaker's arguments with a mind open to persuasion. He makes himself passive to the ideas of the speaker whilst freely interpreting them. In return, the speaker gives generously of his ideas. He appeals to the listener's free comprehension in addressing him and therefore gives the listener value as a worthy recipient of his words.

The Case Against the Communication Argument

In this section, I present my case against the communication argument. My main objection is that it does not adequately address the problem of interpersonal conflict. The Look is our original awareness of the Other as subject, but the Look causes conflict because of our project to have a fixed nature. The communication argument cannot be our original awareness of the Other because it does not give us an idea of the Other as appropriately 'Other'. Therefore, the communication argument must be supplemented with an account of how the original conflict with the Other is to be resolved.

For the first part of this section, I read the communication argument to be claiming that communication is a concrete example of an authentic relation between two subjects. I will then consider communication as an alternative to the Look as an original encounter with the Other.

So far, I have suggested that, in communication, it is possible to apprehend the Other as subject whilst remaining a subject oneself. In conversation, for example, the speaker exists as a subject through articulating his ideas, yet he also apprehends the listener as a subject since he speaks in expectation of a response. This is sufficient for an authentic relation to the Other. Instead of being caught in the perpetual oscillation of the Look, endlessly switching between the object looked at and the subject looking, two subjects transcend the circle and relate to each other directly, as subjects.

However, the communication argument has still not resolved the problem of interpersonal conflict and bad faith. According to *Being and Nothingness*, our original awareness of the Other as a subject introduces our conflict with the Other. To recall from Chapter 1, consciousness is an intentional relation to the world and it relates to everything as its object. To be aware of the Other as *subject*, I cannot intend him as my object. Instead, I become aware of myself as an object-for-others. As a subject is an intentional relation to objects, when I experience myself objectified, I can be certain that I am in contact with another subject. The occasion of my objectification is the Look (BN, 355). I feel shame at being caught spying at the keyhole, and my shame is my immediate apprehension of the Other. This new objective dimension of being that the Other confers is being-for-the-Other (BN, 348).

The Look is our original or primary encounter with the Other (Rae 2009, 56). It is our fundamental awareness of the Other upon which all other relations are founded. For example, Sartre claims that our awareness of the Other as an object is secondary to our awareness of the Other as subject in the Look: ‘its essence must be to refer to a primary relation between my consciousness and that of the Other, in which the Other must be directly

given to me as a subject, although in a connection with me, and which is the fundamental relation, the very type of my being-for-the-Other.' (BN, 348). In the Look, a foreign point of view intrudes into my world as I become an object in a world that centres around the Other. It causes me to undergo an ontological change. Being-for-the-Other cannot be derived from the structure of being-for-itself—it arises only through being intended by the Other. Although my being-for-the-other belongs to me, it does not originate with me. What I am for the Other lies under the Other's control (BN, 386).

But the Look as our primary encounter with the Other initiates interpersonal conflict. Recall that our fundamental project is to make it seem as if we are conscious but have fixed natures. The Other is essential for this project because only through the Other can one acquire a sense of oneself as an object (BN, 369). However, it is for this very reason that relations with others are conflictual. The Look is alienating because it reveals the Other as the free subject who is objectifying me. If the Other is a free, conscious being, then this suggests that I too am a free conscious being (Webber 2009, 123). I react this realisation by Looking at the Other and making him into an object, so as to neutralise the threat. But I also need the Other to Look at me to give me a fixed nature. This begins the endless cycle of objectification.

Hence our primary awareness of the Other also introduces conflict. To be aware of the Other as free subject is to be reminded of one's own freedom, which one is trying to flee from. The communication argument does not say anything about how this conflict is to be resolved; it just asserts that to communicate is to have direct contact with another subject. The communication argument needs to explain why we are happy to communicate with each other as free subjects, and no longer experience their freedom in anguish. This transformation seems to require a prior escape from the God-project, which Sartre calls a

radical conversion. I shall consider this possible solution to the problem of authentic love in the second half of this chapter.

Sartre himself clearly asserts that communication is a secondary relation to the Other, only possible after the original encounter with the Other in the Look. In his discussion of the Look, he says we can only communicate with the Other later, after the primary encounter: 'later, when we liaise directly with the Other through language …' (BN, 362). Language presupposes an awareness of the Other as a subject for two reasons. Firstly, in a universe made of up of only material objects, there would be no communication as there would be no one to address (BN, 493). Therefore, use of language presupposes that other subjects exist. Secondly, for words to have sense, they must have a history and an established use. A word acquires meaning over time as it is used repeatedly to signify a certain thing. If I just developed a new word and then tried to use it to communicate, no one would understand me. I might make gestures with body to make things clearer, but 'body language' also acquires meaning through its past use by other subjects. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre claims that one cannot use an 'Exit' sign and know what it means without having first encountered the Other (BN, 562). Otherwise, the sign would appear in its pure materiality, a block of wood or plastic, and mean nothing. This is equally true of words—without a prior experience of the Other, words would appear as mere noises or lines on a page.

It is not sufficient to resolve the problem of conflict by pointing out cases of harmonious communication. Suppose that a tutor and a student are having a conversation that aims to resolve a philosophical problem. This seems like the ideal case of verbal communication as described in *Hope Now*, where each recognises the Other as a freedom and their thoughts are jointly produced. However, even when communication appears harmonious, we are still

caught in bad faith's cycle of objectification. The tutor and student experience anguish when the Other's freedom suggests to them their own freedom; what they are aiming to do in their conversation is to identify with their social roles as fixed natures (Eshleman 2008a). The tutor tries to be a tutor in a fixed sense, so he adopts a questioning Socratic method, as he believes that this is the way he is determined to teach as an Oxford tutor. Both of them would like to have the fixed qualities of collaborative, curious, intelligent, and so on. Whilst they desire fixed natures, they will not be able to comprehend each other as subjects for, if one should catch a glimpse of the freedom of the Other, he or she shall be swiftly objectified.

So, in summary, communication is a secondary relation with the Other that depends on a prior awareness of the Other as a subject acquired in the Look. But the Look introduces conflict. Therefore, the communication argument needs to explain how this conflict is resolved.

If it could be shown that the Look is not our primary awareness of the Other, then conflict would not be fundamental. Perhaps this is in fact what the communication argument is suggesting; communication can be our primary encounter with the Other, instead of the Look. Then it is through communication that we first become aware of the Other as subject.

The argument could proceed as follows. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre conceives of a subject as a being that opens out onto a world of objects. The advocate of the communication argument challenges this conception: a subject is one who opens out onto a world of both objects *and* subjects. A subject is just another point of view on the shared, intersubjective world. In conversation, I can come into contact with another point of view. Listening allows

me to experience the world as the Other experiences it. Instead of the other point of view being an intrusion into my world, I try to access this point of view in communication.

However, this argument fails because it cannot give us an idea of the Other that is appropriately 'Other'. The communication argument fails to adequately capture the separateness of subjects. To see why this is the case, let us look at the ideal case of communication. As Sartre states in *Hope Now*, communication in the purest and best case creates a 'plural thought' (HN, 74). What I say or write to the Other is interpreted by him and given a new meaning. He directly participates in the ideas that are expressed. I cannot say that these ideas are created by me or him alone, but that they are the joint product of our conversation. This is the kind of communication that gives us the concept of the Other as a subject because one directly apprehends the Other's subjectivity. Mine and the Other's points of view combine into a joint perspective which opens out onto the same world. Again, consider the example of a conversation in a philosophy tutorial. When communication approaches the ideal case, I inhabit your point of view and we together create ideas that properly belong to both of us. This is supposedly a direct apprehension of your subjectivity whilst I remain a subject myself.

However, in our apprehension of the Other's subjectivity through communication, we lose our sense of the Other as the subject which is not-me (BN, 319, 389). If a subject is a point of view on the world, then, in the ideal case of communication, we lose our sense of being different from one another. If Sartre is correct that consciousness is pure intentionality, then there is nothing as a content of consciousness that could differentiate it from the Other. Consciousness is just a relation to the world. In communication, the Other and I are the same

joint relation onto the world, in which case, it is entirely incidental that there are two separate subjects involved—it is almost as if I am talking to myself.

I have already mentioned this argument earlier, when I recounted Sartre's objections to the joint subject of the 'We'. He considers the experience of a We-subject that encompasses the whole of humankind. Thinking of oneself as this 'everyman', one loses one's own subjectivity, and other human beings lose their character as Other.

> …in this experience, the others are not felt in any way to be subjects, nor are they grasped as objects. They are not posited *at all*. …I have a lateral and non-positional consciousness of their bodies as correlative to my body, of their actions as unfolding in conjunction with my actions, in such a way that I am unable to tell whether it is my actions that are generating their actions or their actions that are generating mine. These few remarks suffice to make I clear that, in the experience of the *we*, the others who form part of the *we* cannot originally be given to me to be known as others. (BN, 562)

This is why Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* holds that it is impossible to be in direct contact with another subject whilst one also remains a subject (BN, 401). Firstly, one cannot intend the Other's awareness as awareness because, as soon as the Other's awareness becomes one's intentional object, it loses its subjectivity (Webber 2009, 126-7). Secondly, even if it were possible to be aware of the Other's awareness whilst remaining a subject oneself, this would destroy the distinction between the two subjects. Suppose the Other is aware of a pain in his foot. If I become aware of this pain in a foot, the pain loses its character as the Other's pain and just becomes my pain.

The communication theorist might dispute my ideal case of communication. The purest and best case of communication is still an Other-directed address. I aim my ideas at the Other in expectation that he will give freely of his comprehension and response in return. However,

if communication is already ‘to aim at the Other as subject’ *by definition*, then communication *itself* cannot be the origin of our awareness of the Other as subject. Rather, communication would have to be reliant on a prior awareness of the Other that gives us our idea of what to aim at.

I will give one final argument that communication cannot be our primary encounter with the Other as subject. Sartre suggests that one cannot be fully human without being-for-the-Other: ‘It would not perhaps be impossible to conceive of a for-itself who was wholly free of any for-the-Other and able to exist without even suspecting the possibility of being an object. Only this for-itself would not be ‘man’.’ (BN, 384). Being-for-the-Other is my objecthood; it is my outside in a shared world. Without being an object, I would not be able to conceive of myself as having qualities. It is the Other who gives me this side of my being. ‘The moment the other appears, that nihilating flight is entirely seized back by the in-itself and frozen into the in-itself. On its own, the for-itself is transcendent in relation to the world; it is the nothing through which *there are* things. The other, as he arises, confers on the for-itself a being-in-itself-in-the-midst-of-the-world as a thing among things.’ (BN, 565). This objective dimension of my being does not take away my freedom—the object-being that the Other give me is my outside, in the sense that I can coincide with it, for it is always outside me (Eshleman 2008a).

Communication, however, cannot give us an outside because it does not objectify. It is a relation between two subjects. So we cannot get rid of the objectification of the Look unless we are to lose our humanity. But the objectification of the Look will inevitably bring conflict, as long as we continue to follow the God-project. Therefore, it is the prevalence of the God-project that must be targeted if we are to have authentic relations with the Other.

In summary, I reject the communication argument as a solution to the problem of authentic love because it does not adequately address the interpersonal conflict introduced by the Look. However, I agree that communication could be the occasion of comprehension if the fundamental conflict of the Look could somehow be removed. In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I argue that the infant first encounters the Other in a loving Look without conflict. Then infant and mother comprehend each other in their first conversations. For the rest of this chapter, I shall examine the conversion argument, and argue that it too fails as a solution to the problem of authentic love.

The Conversion Argument

Unlike the communication argument, the conversion argument directly addresses the conflict that results from our pursuit of the God-project. I argued above that the God-project must be abandoned if our relations with others are to break free from the endless circle of objectification. The conversion argument asserts that one can escape the God-project through a radical conversion. In the radical conversion, one replaces the God-project with freedom as one's highest value. Once we have undergone a radical conversion, authentic relations with others will be possible. The conversion argument thus proposes to resolve the dilemma I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Authentic love is practically possible in a society of widespread bad faith because it is possible for people to individually overcome bad faith through a radical conversion.

Proponents of the conversion argument[15] claim that the conversion provides the basis for a Sartrean ethics, grounded in the ontology of *Being and Nothingness*. I will not consider the question of whether such an ethics can be invented. I shall begin this section by explaining what the radical conversion is. I will then outline the arguments that claim it is a necessary and sufficient condition for authentic love. Finally, I make the case that the conversion argument fails to show that authentic love is practically possible, because the radical conversion itself is impossible.

What is the Radical Conversion?

In brief, a radical conversion is the adoption of a new fundamental project. As projects are arranged hierarchically (Ch. 1, 15), changing one's fundamental project will result in a transformation of all of one's other projects and values. The conversion is a self-willed choice and is not compelled by any reason. I will now explore these features in more detail.

Sartre portrays conversion as a total transformation of all of one's projects in *Being and Nothingness*. He gives an example of a group of hikers on a walk. One of the group suddenly throws his bag down on the ground and demands a rest. His fellow hikers reproach him, implying that his collapse was freely chosen, for one can only be reproached where one could have chosen otherwise. The tired hiker could have held out until their scheduled stop (BN, 595). But Sartre argues that refusing to give into the fatigue would have required a radical conversion. Such a conversion would be a totally new choice of oneself and one's ends:

[15] See Anderson (1970, 1993, 1997); Bell (1989, 1997); Rae (2009); Zheng (2002).

> That does not imply that I *must necessarily* stop, but merely that I can refuse to stop only through a radical conversion of my being-in-the-world, which is to say by a sudden metamorphosis of my initial project, which is to say, by a different choice of myself and of my ends.. (BN, 607-8)

Such a conversion would be self-willed. It is my choice to abandon my old project and replace it with a new project: 'we ourselves can suddenly reverse this choice and change course'. Furthermore, this choice is not motivated by reason. Our previous projects cannot give us any reason for abandoning and replacing them, because it is the choice itself to adopt the new project that gives us our new reasons and motives for pursuing it. In Sartre's view, reasons result from our freely chosen projects, not the other way round. As conversion does not require a reason or motive, it can happen at any time: 'Thus we are constantly *threatened* with the nihilation of our current choice, constantly threatened with choosing ourselves…other than we are…. This absolute change by which we are threatened from our birth to our death remains constantly unpredictable and incomprehensible.' (BN, 608).

The conversion that we are concerned with here is a shift from the bad faith of the God-project to authenticity. To recall from earlier, an authentic existence is one in which I accept my situated freedom and radical responsibility. In other words, instead of fleeing the human condition, as we do in bad faith, we accept it. According to Thomas Anderson, this change in fundamental project is brought about by a move from impure to pure reflection. In impure reflection, I posit myself as an object that has fixed states and qualities; a being with a fixed nature. To conceive of myself in this way supports my God-project, where I try to make it seem as if I have a fixed nature. Sartre says that impure reflection is the natural tendency of human consciousness (BN, 229). In our society, impure reflection is encouraged, because

acting in such a way as to demonstrate one's radical freedom undermines other people's God-projects.

In contrast, pure reflection is the state of self-awareness that constitutes authenticity. Anderson defines the authentic individual as one who, through pure reflection, has a lucid awareness of herself as both a contingent and a free being. Not only this, the authentic person accepts the human condition and wills it, along with taking responsibility for her existence (1993, 55). Subsequently, he argues, the project to become God is replaced with freedom as one's ultimate end. 'Pure reflection, conversion, recognises and accepts that failure [to become God], breaks with the God project, and replaces that vain goal with freedom.' (1993, 53).

There is evidence in the *Notebooks* that this is also Sartre's view. Somewhat in conflict with his earlier description of conversion as unmotivated, he claims that conversion to authenticity can be brought about by the continual failure of the God-project (NE, 472). Impure or 'accessory' reflection is an unsuccessful attempt to coincide with our invented fixed nature (NE, 473). It prompts the move to a pure or 'nonaccessory reflection', which brings about a 'new, "*authentic,*" way of being oneself and for oneself, which transcends the dialectic of sincerity and bad faith' and a 'thematic grasping of freedom, of gratuity, of unjustifiability.' (NE, 473-4).

A Necessary Condition for the Possibility of Authentic Love

The conversion argument takes radical conversion to be both a necessary and sufficient condition for authentic love. I will first examine the claim that it is a necessary condition.

To hold that conversion is a necessary condition for authentic love is to assert that a conversion has to take place in order for there to be authentic love, although one leaves it open as to whether other conditions must also be in place. Sartre himself seems to consider conversion to be a necessary condition for authentic relations. At the beginning of the *Notebooks*, he considers in what sense are human beings inauthentic by nature: '…there is a nature that is inauthenticity. The very fact that *Being and Nothingness* is an ontology before conversion takes for granted that a conversion is necessary and that, as a consequence, there is a natural attitude.' (NE, 5-6). He suggests here that a conversion is necessary to escape inauthenticity.

The argument I shall consider here proceeds as follows: prior to conversion, we are in bad faith; it is only after a conversion that one can adopt a project of authenticity; when one lives authentically, authentic relations with others will be possible, including authentic love (Rae 2009, 55).

The first premise of the argument is that we are all in bad faith. In Chapter 1, I argued that bad faith is a widespread phenomenon because an individual's pursuit of the God-project is undermined when he encounters other people who demonstrate their radical freedom. People following the God-project therefore encourage others to behave as if they have fixed natures. Sartre alludes to this point when he gives his famous example of the waiter who is in bad faith. Part of the reason why the waiter pretends that he has the fixed nature of being a waiter is that his customers demand that he be nothing more than his function: 'A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because he is no longer completely a grocer. Etiquette requires him to contain himself in his grocer's function, as the soldier standing to attention makes himself a soldier-thing' (BN, 103).

Whilst we are in bad faith, relations with others are inevitably conflictual. I need the Other to give me a fixed nature but, at the same time, the Other's Look reveals to me my freedom. Thus I am caught in an endless cycle of objectifying and wanting to be objectified.

The God-project is in bad faith because it flees from the human condition to hide in the pretence of having a fixed nature. Authenticity, in contrast, is an embrace of one's radical freedom and responsibility. It is therefore impossible to be both authentic and in bad faith with respect to the same thing at the same time. Thus we need to abandon the God-project before we can adopt a project of authenticity.

The conversion argument claims that to abandon the God-project is to undergo a radical conversion. One makes an absolute and self-willed choice to adopt a new fundamental project. After this, authentic relations with others will be possible, including authentic love. This seems to be Sartre's view in *Being and Nothingness*, where he claims that we will be delivered from bad faith relations with others 'only after a radical conversion' (BN, 543n34).

In summary, if the God-project must be rejected before we can experience authentic love, and if to reject the God-project is to undergo a radical conversion, then radical conversion is a necessary condition for authentic love.

A Sufficient Condition for the Possibility of Authentic Love

I will now examine the claim that radical conversion is a sufficient condition for the possibility of authentic love. By a sufficient condition, I mean that the radical conversion,

on its own, is capable of bringing about authentic love. In other words, for authentic love to be possible, no conditions need be in place other than a radical conversion. In brief, the argument claims that, after conversion, one adopts freedom as one's highest value. This leads one to seek the freedom of others. One is motivated to protect and therefore bestow value on the Other's body, which I defined in Chapter 1 as authentic love.

As described above, the conversion is a move from impure reflection to pure reflection. One accepts one's freedom and responsibility and replaces the God-project with freedom as one's ultimate end (Anderson 1993, 53). We adopt freedom as our highest value because it is the only source of justification for human being. According to Anderson, humans seek justification for their being but pure reflection reveals that human freedom is the only source of meaning and value. He claims that our given 'task' as human beings is to introduce meaning into the world—for example, in perception. If we freely choose and will this task, then we will grant this task meaning and value. Alternatively, if we are searching for justification and only human freedom can provide a justification for anything, it is logically consistent for human beings to freely choose that justifying freedom, and thereby justify it (1993, 61).

So far, however, Anderson has not shown that there is any obligation to recognise and respect the freedom of others. I may have a reason to value my own freedom, but I do not have a reason to value the freedom of anyone else. It would be possible to authentically imprison, maim, and kill people, so long as I accepted my freedom and responsibility whilst doing so (Anderson 1993, 55).

However, because we exist in a world with others, a radical conversion entails an obligation to value their freedom too (Anderson 1993, 72). Ontologically speaking, human freedom is absolute. It is possible to reject any project and to adopt a new one. However, in practice, human freedom is concrete and situated. What is given to one in the world, which will depend upon the free choices of other human beings, will affect the options that one faces (although it will not constitute these options as *obstacles*—this depends on the individual's free choice of project). Therefore, human freedoms are interdependent in the shared world.[16]

Anderson provides another argument for respecting the freedom of others. As a human freedom, the other is capable of bringing values and meaning into the world. I would like my projects to have meaning and value. The Other must be free so that he is able to value and give meaning to my projects (Anderson 1993, 75).

This duty towards the Other is not simply a negative duty of non-interference, but a positive duty to promote the Other's freedom. This is because I desire the Other's recognition (Anderson 1993, 74). The authentic individual is seeking justification for her existence. She is aware that her freedom is intertwined with the freedom of others. Human freedom is the only source of value; therefore she wants the Other to value and justify her existence. The Other is most likely to offer this recognition if the authentic individual recognises him in return. Furthermore, she wishes to be recognised by a being of equal value to herself, otherwise the recognition will be worthless. Therefore, the authentic individual values freedom in the Other in order to make it valuable, meaningful, and worthy of recognising her own freedom. As recognition has to be given freely to confer value, not out of dire need

[16] This argument is also made by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (EA, 71; 82).

or dependency, the authentic person works positively to make sure the Other is free (Anderson 1993, 77).[17]

Thus the authentic individual is obligated to actively promote the Other's freedom. She must help the Other if he appeals to her to help him be free. To recall from the *Notebooks*, to help the Other to achieve his ends is to comprehend his freedom: '…in grasping another's end, there is a preontological comprehension of the other's freedom by my freedom.' (NE, 277). One does not appropriate the Other's goal and make him into a means, but rather one adopts his ends so as to help *him* to achieve them. One thus begins to co-exist with the Other in a manner that affirms his own freedom (Rae 2009, 68-69).

As well as promoting the Other's freedom, I also aim to protect his facticity. I wish to protect the Other's facticity because it is the necessary condition of his freedom. I want him to recognise me, and for that he has to be free. So I protect his material vulnerability from external threats (NE, 508). Through my project to protect the Other's body, I bestow value on his body, and therefore this is a case of authentic love.

After the conversion, one no longer seeks to use the Other's Look to gain a fixed nature. One instead accepts that one is both a free subject and an objectively situated body. In pure reflection, one realises that it is the Look of the Other that discloses my object-being from the Other to me (Rae 2009, 59). The Look, coupled with recognition of my subjectivity, aids my project of disclosing Being by conferring new attributes upon me and enriching the world.

[17] See also T. Storm Heter (2006a, 27).

The Case Against the Conversion Argument

So far, I have explained why advocates of the conversion argument believe that a radical conversion is a necessary and sufficient condition for authentic love. Now I will dispute these claims. First, I shall argue that radical conversion is not a sufficient condition for authentic love because of the bad faith of patriarchy. Raised into gender roles, it is currently very difficult for individuals to make the radical conversion to authenticity. What we need to do first is to change the structure of society, and then individual conversion will become possible. Therefore, on its own, the radical conversion is not a sufficient condition for authentic love.

However, it could be argued in response that a radical conversion is always possible, regardless of one's current projects, for the conversion is spontaneous and unmotivated. Therefore the existence of patriarchy does not preclude an individual conversion to authenticity. But this leads us to a deeper problem for the conversion argument. The radical conversion is in fact impossible, and therefore the conversion cannot be a necessary condition for authentic love either. I argue with Jonathan Webber (2018) that projects are sedimented—they acquire inertia the longer that one pursues them. A sedimented project can only be replaced through a process of gradual erosion. Being a man or a woman under patriarchy are examples of sedimented projects, which cannot be overthrown by a radical conversion.

At the end of the chapter, I will present a possible explanation as to why Sartre concluded that all love was doomed to failure. Sartre's argument only applies to love afflicted by the

bad faith of patriarchy. He does not realise this, and therefore does not grasp the possibility of an authentic love that exists outside of patriarchy.

I will begin with the argument that the conversion is not a sufficient condition for authentic love. The conversion to authenticity requires that one accept oneself as both a free subject and a situated, finite being. Similarly, authentic romantic love requires that both partners recognise and value each other's freedom. However, Simone de Beauvoir persuasively argues that men do not recognise women's free transcendence under patriarchy. 'Patriarchy' here refers to the systematic dominance of men throughout society and culture. Under patriarchy, woman is trapped in immanence and denied her transcendence (SS, 17). In a bad faith society, this may seem to be an attitude that is not exclusively directed towards women, since people of all genders pretend to have a fixed nature. But what Beauvoir means by this claim is that women are raised to maintain their situation rather than to radically transform it (Webber 2018, 190-1). Woman devotes her freedom to repetitive tasks that reproduce human existence, such as housework and child-rearing, rather than projects that would creatively transform her situation. Part of woman's situation is the meaning that is given to the physical properties of her body. For example, menstruation widely is considered disgusting. Her patriarchal upbringing leads her to projects that maintain these meanings, rather than challenging them.

Woman under patriarchy is seen as the inessential Other (SS, 7). She is Other to man because man is taken to be the neutral subject, whereas woman is defined as not-being a man. If man is judged to be the standard of evaluation, then woman will always appear to be inferior, precisely because she is not a man. But a woman is not just inferior to man in patriarchy—she is inessential. Her own way of being is not recognised by man, as she is seen only as

that which is not a man. Furthermore, patriarchy aims to conceal woman's oppression from her, in order to prevent any feelings of solidarity with her fellow women. She does not simply lose a struggle with man for supremacy—rather, she is barred from participating in any such struggle.

The motivation for men in patriarchy to treat women in this way is the God-project (Bergoffen 2002). Man would like to use woman to give him a fixed nature as important and valuable, but at the same time avoid the disturbing freedom revealed by her Look. But only a free subject is capable of giving him a fixed nature. So patriarchy traps woman's transcendence in immanence. She is brought up to defer to men, to regard herself as an object, and not to exercise her creative transcendence. Patriarchy has made woman the mirror for man's subjectivity: beautiful, inert flesh that would provide him with guaranteed positive affirmation (Bergoffen 2002).

We can observe this dynamic in romantic love. In romantic love, man is seeking a free subject that he nevertheless can control, in order to achieve his God-project. The man in love wants to guarantee a positive evaluation, but he also wants to be chosen freely. For this he needs a subject, but a subject that does not exercise its radical freedom and can be possessed. Beauvoir describes how a husband will provoke his wife to occasionally reveal her freedom, to reassure himself that he possesses a real freedom (SS, 468). For her part, the woman in love is totally devoted to her lover. She wants to be needed and for demands to be made of her (SS, 691). She totally abdicates her freedom for the benefit of having a master (SS, 683). This master will tell her what to do, so she does not have to exercise her troubling freedom. The fact that woman has been raised to defer to man gives man the false belief that she will never leave him. He feels that he has achieved his God-project.

Under the bad faith of patriarchy, authentic love is impossible. Because of his refusal to accept his own contingency and to admit to woman's subjectivity, patriarchal man cannot undergo the conversion. Woman, in contrast, has been brought up to think of herself as inessential and an object. She is unable to accept and embrace her freedom, which is what conversion requires. One result of this is that there can be no generosity between lovers under patriarchy. Woman is not recognised as a free subject, so she cannot offer anything as a gift to the Other. Her gifts of time, housework and childcare are dismissed as biological drives or self-interested, merely immanent (Bergoffen 1997).

Authentic love, however, would be possible in a society free from patriarchy. Women and men would be able to recognise each other's freedom and treat each other as equals (Vintges 1996). Beauvoir describes such a love:

> Authentic love must be founded on reciprocal recognition of two freedoms; each lover would then experience himself as himself and as the other; neither would abdicate his transcendence, they would not mutilate themselves; together, they would both reveal values and ends in the world. For each of them, love would be the revelation of self through the gift of self and the enrichment of the universe. (SS, 706)

According to Beauvoir, female emancipation requires not just equality in rights and law, but equal education, equal opportunity to work (and for the same pay), erotic freedom, free choice to marry and to divorce, access to birth control and abortion and paid maternity leave (SS, 760). Women also need economic independence and freedom to pursue her own

projects, in order to live her transcendence. If all this could be achieved, then relationships between equals would be possible (SS, 762).

The conversion is therefore not a sufficient condition in itself for authentic love. For an individual conversion to authenticity to be possible, first the bad faith of patriarchy must be removed. Then both men and women will be able to recognise and embrace their own and the other's freedom. Sartre himself concedes this point in the *Notebooks*. 'One cannot be converted alone. In other words, ethics is not possible unless everyone is ethical.' (NE, 9) Individual conversion is not enough for authenticity—we need to see society-wide change.

However, the conversion argument can respond to this objection. As I explained earlier, the radical conversion is unmotivated and does not depend on reasons found within one's former project. In this sense, conversion is spontaneous and random. Because of this, it does not matter that woman has been raised to defer to men—she does not need any reason or motive for her spontaneous conversion to authenticity. But this defence of the conversion argument actually leads to a deeper objection. For it shows us why the radical conversion cannot even be a necessary condition for authentic love. This is what I shall now discuss.

It is correct that, on Sartre's view in *Being and Nothingness*, woman should be able to overcome her upbringing instantaneously and effortlessly. According to Webber (2018, 4-5), this is because Sartre does not believe that projects can have inertia, beyond our continued endorsement of them. Radical freedom consists in our ability to abandon or alter any project, no matter how long we have had it, for no reason at all. As projects are not just goals, but rather posit values that structure our experience, changing one's project will change how one experiences the world and the reasons that the world presents.

But this account of how we adopt new projects is wrong and in his later works Sartre himself realised this (Webber 2018, 125). Beauvoir has an alternative view of freedom. The repeated pursuit of a project over time increases the project's inertia and weight, so it is less likely to be rejected and its influence is increased. Such projects come to shape one's experience, values, and thoughts. A sedimented project can only be replaced through gradual erosion, which Beauvoir calls an inner metamorphosis (Webber 2018, 92). One replaces the sedimented project when alternative values become equally sedimented. Yet Beauvoir maintains that freedom is infinite (Webber 2018, 68), because one is still able to commit to projects that shape one's experience. One is still able to choose and abandon the projects that one follows, but it takes a long process of sedimentation to implement one's choices.

There are three reasons why Beauvoir's view of freedom is superior to Sartre's. First of all, it fits better with our experience—one cannot throw off all the baggage of being raised a woman in an instant. Children are socialised into gender roles. They are praised or punished in accordance with their conformity to their gender. They are encouraged to adopt the projects of their gender role. Feminine and masculine values have become sedimented. It is therefore impossible to overthrow the bad faith of patriarchy in a radical conversion; new values must be acquired through gradual sedimentation.

Secondly, because we can abandon a project at any time for no reason, one cannot commit to a project on Sartre's early view. Even if one has held a project for a long time, one could abandon it in an instant. But we usually think of commitment as a perseverance with the project, even when one is tempted to abandon it. In Beauvoir's view, we can explain this in terms of the project's sedimentation.

Finally, and most importantly, we cannot maintain that bad faith is a societal phenomenon without the idea of sedimentation. If it is true that we can abandon any project for no reason, why are so many people in Western society following the God-project? On Beauvoir's view, people are socialised into bad faith and these projects become sedimented. They then struggle to conceive of alternatives and find it difficult to make the replacement. If Sartre wants to maintain that forms of bad faith are widespread throughout society, then he ought to agree with the idea of sedimentation. According to Webber, this is in fact what causes Sartre to change his mind (2018, 124). He adopts Beauvoir's view of freedom by the time he writes *Saint Genet* (Webber 2018, 125) He can now explain why bad faith is widespread; it is not just that people in bad faith encourage others to also flee from their freedom, but that having a fixed nature is sedimented as a cultural value.

For these reasons, the radical conversion is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for authentic love because a radical conversion is impossible. Projects are sedimented, so to replace a project requires a counter-sedimentation of alternative values. In the case of patriarchy, which makes authentic love impossible, we cannot overcome bad faith gender roles with a simple conversion. Therefore the conversion argument fails as a solution to the problem of authentic love.

Patriarchy and Love in *Being and Nothingness*

The last point that I will make in this chapter is an exegetical one. Reading Sartre's description of love in *Being and Nothingness* together with Beauvoir's account of love under patriarchy, reveals a possible reason why Sartre thought that authentic love was doomed to

failure. Sartre is describing the dynamic of romantic love under patriarchy, although he does not realise that he is doing this; this is because he pursues a type of phenomenology that attempts to identify universal structures of human being.

Sartre's description of the beloved in *Being and Nothingness* resembles Beauvoir's description of the woman in love in *The Second Sex* (SS, 683). In *Being and Nothingness*, the lover wants his beloved to be fully devoted to him, to make him the centre of her universe and source of all her values (BN, 487, 489). He desires this because then he would have a nature that is sufficiently fixed because it originates in the Other, and is secure because her love is guaranteed. If woman's transcendence is trapped in immanence, then he can maintain that her choice to love him is both free and guaranteed. It is a free choice insofar as she is a subject, but guaranteed insofar as she has been socialised to maintain her situation and not exercise her free transcendence.

The woman in love, the beloved, is happy to make the man her absolute value. For, as described above, she is completely devoted to her lover (SS, 691). But she wants to be an object for her male lover, not a subject who confers upon him a fixed nature. Like Sartre's masochist, she wants to absorb herself fully in the Other's free subjectivity, to escape her own troubling freedom (BN, 499; SS, 411). But her desire to be absorbed in the Other is more complex. She hopes that by merging with her male lover, she will be able to reclaim her status as free transcendence. As the inessential Other, woman is not recognised as a free conscious subject like man. She can only be such a subject in their union. As soon as she realises herself as other, she is the inessential Other, so she does not want to separate from him (SS, 411). Hence, '[t]he supreme aim of human love… is identification with the loved one.' (SS, 693).

Union can be achieved in the erotic encounter but, when intercourse is over, the woman in love feels like an object again—like her lover's prey (SS, 689-90). So she tries to capture and possess the man's freedom by making herself passive prey. She wants the man to exist as carnal passivity as well, trapped by his sexual desire (SS, 754). Then she will be able to appropriate his free transcendence.

But, as Sartre correctly identifies in *Being and Nothingness*, masochism is self-defeating. The masochist asserts his freedom by using the Other as a means to pursue his project of self-absorption (BN, 501). The woman who tries to be absorbed in her lover's freedom reveals her own freedom through her project. As soon as man realises that she is not the docile, controlled freedom that he desires, he anxiously realises that she can fall out of love with him. 'But he himself is a slave to his double: what effort to build up an image in which he is always in danger! After all, it is founded on the capricious freedom of women' (SS, 756).

The bad faith of patriarchy can help us to understand why Sartre thinks that to love is to wish to be loved—and why this dooms love to failure. The male lover wants to be an object for his beloved, because he is trying to possess her freedom. But the woman in love is so devoted to him that she wants to lose herself in his subjectivity. She wants to be a passive object for him, but this is part of her project to appropriate his free transcendence. If he sees her as a subject, her project fails. Therefore, love is an infinite referral because both lovers are trying to be the objects of each other's love.

Sartre does not recognise that he is describing love under patriarchy, nor does he try to imagine what a love outside of patriarchy would be like. This is because the aim of *Being and Nothingness* is to uncover timeless, universal structures of human being—aspects of existence that are true for all humans. For example, in his discussion of fundamental projects, he asserts that there are such universal structures of human being: 'it may be easily understood that there are as many ways of existing one's body as there are for-itselfs, even though, naturally, certain original structures are invariable and constitute human-reality in each instance'. He then suggests that his concern is with the universal structures; 'we will deal elsewhere with the relation of the individual to the species' (BN, 597).

However, in reality, Sartre is describing the experience of a white, middle-class man in 1940s Paris. Because he does not explicitly recognise his own situation, his philosophy sometimes excludes the perspectives of marginalised groups. He offers a male perspective on love under patriarchy and does not try to consider love from the perspective of women. The male lover asks for complete devotion from his female beloved and, as soon as his beloved starts to ask for devotion in return, love breaks down. Even in the *Notebooks*, Sartre never explicitly envisions the alternative of a reciprocal romantic love between equals.

This interpretation of Sartre's account of love suggests that there are two types of phenomenology. The first type starts from the concrete experiences of people in specific situations to conclude something about their being in the world. This type of phenomenology is more popular amongst feminist philosophers. These philosophers claim to have fully taken on board Maurice Merleau-Ponty's claim that there can be no objective or universal view, for the observer herself is always situated (Welsh 2013). The second type of phenomenology, however, claims to describe underlying structures of human experience

that are true for all human beings. This type of phenomenology is more common in the study of self-consciousness, perception, and action. The reasoning is that these experiences are broadly similar for all human beings, but even this assumption has been challenged (e.g. by Iris Marion Young in *Throwing Like a Girl* (2005)). This is the kind of phenomenology that Sartre is pursuing in his early works.

However, in his later philosophy, Sartre seems to shift towards the first type of phenomenology. For example, in *The Family Idiot* he describes humans as 'universal singulars', living their situation in place and time in their own particular manner (FI, 1, ix). In *The Problem of Method*, he recognises that one's set of possibilities is delimited by one's society, culture and language (PM, 64).

It is more appropriate to study love with the first type of phenomenology rather than the second. This is because love is a culturally narrated performance, which Beauvoir recognises (Secomb 2007). Love is neither a purely private affair, nor a purely social institution—it is ambiguous. As such, one's situation in time and place will affect one's private experience of love. Perhaps one reason why Sartre's description of love strikes us as too pessimistic is because time has passed since he wrote it. But we must be clear that that any account of love that we offer in its place will also be limited to the time and place at which we are writing.

In conclusion, this chapter has considered two arguments for the possibility of authentic love: the communication argument and the conversion argument. I rejected the former because it fails to address our original conflict with the Other. I rejected the latter because a radical conversion is impossible and therefore cannot be either a necessary or a sufficient condition for authentic love. Finally, I explored a possible answer as to why Sartre concludes

that all love is doomed to bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*—he fails to see that he is describing love under patriarchy, and that therefore authentic love might be possible outside of patriarchy. I will argue that authentic romantic love is possible when men and women regard each other as equals. The hope is that, as society progresses, authentic love will become more and more common.

Chapter 3. The Mother-Child Relationship

In the previous chapter, I argued that neither the communication argument nor the conversion argument successfully resolves the puzzle posed in Chapter 1: if bad faith is a widespread phenomenon, how can authentic love be possible? The problem is compounded by the theory of sedimentation that I endorsed in Chapter 2. Not only is bad faith widespread, it is sedimented and therefore difficult to replace with an alternative project. The remaining three chapters of this thesis present my own answer to this problem. I shall explore a form of love largely overlooked by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*: the love between mother and child. I will show that bad faith is not innate, but rather we are socialised into the God-project in childhood. Therefore, our primary encounter with the Other is non-conflictual.

As our original awareness of the Other is not hostile or alienating, this opens the possibility of authentic relations with others as adults. To recall from Chapter 2, I rejected the communication argument because it did not address the fundamental conflict that arises from our original awareness of the Other. If I can show that our conflict with the Other is only a secondary phenomenon, then the mutual comprehension that is claimed to take place in communication becomes a real possibility. However, because of our socialisation into bad faith, such authentic relations with others are rare. I shall argue that, in certain exceptional relationships, we are able to recreate our original, non-conflictual relationship with the mother. This is what makes authentic love possible.

In this chapter, I will present an account of the early mother-child relationship, in order to argue that our original awareness of the Other as subject is non-conflictual. On this account,

the first relationship with the mother is what I call an 'ambiguous union', where both subject and object, and self and other, are experienced ambiguously. I will draw on Sartre's biographies to support my account, in particular his biography of Gustave Flaubert, *The Family Idiot*.

This chapter draws on studies in developmental psychology to describe the key features of the mother-infant relationship. This is because I am concerned with infants of less than a year old, for whom we cannot rely on introspection to understand their experiences. As I shall argue, the ability to reflect is not innate and, furthermore, young infants are not able to communicate the results of their introspection. I use the experimental studies as observations from which we might draw out the structures of the infant's experience.

I will focus on mothers rather than parents in general in this chapter. This is for two reasons. Firstly, I intend to explore the mother's experience of pregnancy. Secondly, there are differences in the way that mothers and fathers interact with the children, the examination of which would take me too far outside the scope of this thesis. However, I believe that much of what is said in this chapter about mothers would apply equally to any primary caregiver.

I shall only consider studies of happy, 'healthy' relationships between mothers and infants in this chapter. I am not trying to beg the question and define these relationships as authentically loving from the start. But I do wish to limit my focus to the average relationship as identified by psychology, in order to show that the experience of ambiguous union is near-universal.

My argument for the ambiguous union proceeds as follows. Firstly, I show that the infant possesses a basic sense of self from birth, which consists of the minimal, ecological, and interpersonal senses of self. Secondly, I argue the infant develops a richer sense of self through her relationship with her mother. Thirdly, I conclude that, before the infant develops a richer sense of self, she exists in an ambiguous union with her mother. Before I begin my discussion of the ambiguous union, I shall briefly outline Sartre's changing views of children, and argue that the child differs phenomenologically, and not ontologically, from the adult.

Sartre's Views on Children

Even though Sartre claims that it is an attempt to describe human being in the world (BN, 34), *Being and Nothingness* has surprisingly little to say about childhood. Sartre gives the impression that adult consciousness simply springs up in the world, a point noted by Hazel Barnes:

> The importance of the relations between mother and infant in determining the child's constitution is something which [Sartre] had hitherto never discussed. One gets the feeling in *Being and Nothingness* that the for-itself sprang forth from the ground of being in full maturity—like Athena from the forehead of Zeus. (Barnes 1981, 24)

Sartre mentions the mother-child relationship only a handful of times, and these are all cursory remarks.[18] The most interesting comment for my argument can be found in a footnote:

> …all of men's complex ways of behaving towards each other are… only elaborations of these two primary attitudes…. Without doubt the concrete

[18] See BN, 489, 639, 793, 204.

> instances of behaviour (collaboration, struggle, rivalry, emulation, commitment, obedience [30] etc.) are infinitely more delicate to describe… but they all contain within themselves, as their skeleton, the relations of sexuality.
>
> [30] …Compare also maternal love, pity, goodness, etc. (BN, 536)

In this quote, Sartre claims that all concrete relations with others, including maternal love, can be reduced to the two primary attitudes. To recall from Chapter 1, the first attitude towards the Other is to try to possess her freedom as a freedom, and the second is to capture her freedom as an object (BN, 481). Both of these attitudes are bad faith attempts to pursue the God-project and are therefore doomed to failure. Sartre suggests that maternal love is no exception.

Furthermore, Sartre claims that maternal love includes as its 'skeleton…relations of sexuality'. It might appear as if Sartre is here endorsing the view of Sigmund Freud, founding father of psychoanalysis, who held that all relations with others were ways of discharging libido or sexual energy (LaPlanche and Pontalis 1983, 239).[19] But this reading of Sartre is incorrect. Sartre rejects Freud's move to reduce all human life to a sexual instinct (BN, 741), a conviction he held onto into later life, as clearly stated in an interview with Kenneth Tynan. 'Unlike some of my friends, however, I am not convinced that the basis of human activity is sexual.' (1967, 309). When Sartre describes maternal love as 'sexual', he means this in an ontological sense of the term. He continues the quote on page 536: 'And that is not because of existence of some '*libido*' that we can see creeping into everything, but simply because the attitudes we have described are the fundamental projects through which the for-itself *actualises* its being-for-the-Other and attempts to transcend this *de facto* situation.' Here, Sartre seems to be claiming that all relations are sexual simply insofar as

[19] James Giles (1999) argues in favour of this interpretation.

they follow one of the two primary attitudes (Webber 2009, 142). This is why sexual desire can occur in those too young for or incapable of sexual intercourse (BN, 507).

One reason why Sartre does not talk more about children in *Being and Nothingness* could be that he conceives the child's existence to be just the same as the adult's. Children are adults but in smaller bodies. Since he has already described adult human beings, he does not need to provide a separate analysis of children. There is evidence in the *Notebooks* that this is indeed Sartre's view. Here, he says that the parent-child relationship does 'violence' to the child. This is because the parents' demands do not respect the child as a free subject. In Sartre's example, a father forbids his son from going down into the basement whilst he is sweaty because he might catch a cold. But this does not respect the child's freedom to choose an alternative end and risk the cold. The father enforces the rule as if it is a categorical imperative ('nobody goes into the basement like that'), rather than more accurately posing the rule as a hypothetical ('if you don't want to catch a cold, don't go into the basement sweaty and without a jacket') (NE, 189-90). Even if the father reasons with the child, he does not respect the child's freedom, for the child cannot yet comprehend reason (NE, 192). The parent might impose such rules with the child's own good in mind but this end still lies outside the child—the good is the man that the child will become. 'Hence by obligation properly speaking the father does violence to the child' (NE, 191).[20]

In this example, the parent's offence is regarding the child as a lesser freedom. Sartre seems to imply that the child has the same radical freedom as the adult. He does not recognise the

[20] Sartre makes a similar argument in *Being and Nothingness*, in which he claims that even a 'liberal' education fails to respect the child's freedom (BN, 539).

child's special relation of dependency. Just as it would be wrong to deprive an adult of her freedom by telling her what to do, it is similarly wrong to command a child.

In contrast, Sartre's contemporary, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, denies that the child is simply an adult consciousness in a smaller body. Instead, he argues, we must treat the child's existence as a phenomenon in its own right. 'Children are not, as was previously thought, "miniature adults" …. [W]e must treat the child's consciousness as a positive phenomenon.' (Merleau-Ponty 2010, 131).

In his later works, Sartre comes to adopt the same view. This is most clearly demonstrated in *The Problem of Method*, where Sartre emphasises the importance of studying childhood. We can only explain a person's character or 'constitution' if:

> we understand that everything took place *in childhood*, that is, in a condition radically distinct from the adult condition. It is childhood which sets up unsurpassable prejudices, it is childhood which, in the violence of training and the frenzy of the tamed beast, makes us experience the fact of our belonging to our environment *as a unique event*' (PM, 59-60)

Sartre now urges other philosophers to grant childhood its own separate investigation. 'Today's Marxists are concerned only with adults; reading them, one would believe that we are born at the age when we earn our first wages. They have forgotten their own childhoods.' (PM, 62).

Part of the reason behind Sartre's new interest in childhood is his adoption of Beauvoir's theory of sedimentation, as discussed in the previous chapter (87). He replaces the Athena picture, where consciousness just springs up, with the idea that one's situation in childhood will shape the possible projects that one can adopt, and thus the kind of person that one can

become. The child's initial situation is shaped by his family, his class, and his place in history (FI, 1, ix).

Childhood does not determine adulthood; rather, there a 'predestination'. In an interview on *The Family Idiot*, Sartre states, 'I do not mean to say that this sort of predestination precludes all choice, but one knows that in choosing, one will not attain what one has chosen. It is what I call the necessity of freedom.' (1977, 116). He adds: '[O]ptions remained for Gustave…but they were conditional options.' (1977, 117). Choices remain but the set of possibilities that one can choose from is limited. It is always possible to abandon an entrenched project and therefore expand one's set of possibilities, but this requires a process of counter-sedimentation which takes a long time to achieve (Webber 2018, 92).

I will draw on ideas from Sartre's later writings to support my account of the mother-child relationship, in particular his biographies *Baudelaire*, *Saint Genet*, and *The Family Idiot*, and his autobiography, *Words*. I do not agree with everything that Sartre has to say about childhood, as shall become clear. However, these works provide many useful insights into the mother-child relationship that warrant further attention.

The Ontological Status of the Child

So far, I have claimed that the child differs from the adult and ought to be studied in its own right, but I have not stated how the child differs from the adult. The child could differ from the adult either ontologically or phenomenologically. If the child differs ontologically from adult being-for-itself, then children exist in either the mode of being-in-itself or in a third mode of being. Sartre dismisses the second option. He asserts that there is no continuum between being-for-itself and being-in-itself; these are the only modes of existence (Schilpp

1997, 40). In any case, if the child had a different way of being to the adult, the transition from childhood to adulthood would be a dramatic change. But, phenomenologically, human life is experienced as a smooth, continuous transition. This point also applies if the child is in-itself, in which case the transition to adulthood would be as radical as a stone becoming conscious.

Although this is not a definitive rejection, these considerations do make the claim that the child is ontologically distinct from the adult less plausible. Therefore, I instead support the view that child differs phenomenologically from the adult. I mean this in the sense that the world and other people appear differently to the infant. This is not so much the case with respect to what infants actually perceive, as we shall see that newborn perception is quite sophisticated, but rather insofar as the infant lacks the concepts that adults use to shape and organise their experiences. As I shall demonstrate, one key difference is that infants lack the ability to self-reflect. Despite this, the child is still for-itself, like the adult. It is an intentional consciousness that is the foundation of its own nothingness.

My aim here is not to replace Sartre's conception of the for-itself in *Being and Nothingness*, but to expand it. Tracing the origins of the adult for-itself in childhood will help us to better understand human being as a whole. Starting with the child will help to comprehend why bad faith is widespread throughout society, and how authentic love can still be possible.

A Phenomenological Account of the Mother-Child Relationship

1. The infant possesses a basic sense of self from birth, but not a fully developed sense of self

In this section, I give my own account of the mother-child relationship during early infancy. I will begin by showing that the infant has a basic sense of self from birth. This 'basic sense of self' refers to three different kinds of awareness that the infant has of herself: the minimal, the ecological, and the interpersonal. These senses of self are 'basic' because they are non-positional and all present from birth or shortly after. I will begin with the minimal sense of self.

The Minimal Sense of Self

The minimal sense of self is equivalent to what Sartre calls 'non-positional self-consciousness', which I outlined in Chapter 1 (11-13). All instances of positional consciousness (consciousness *of* an object) are also episodes of non-positional self-consciousness. This is because to perceive a chair as distinct from oneself is for the chair to appear as not-being oneself. This consciousness of oneself is non-positional because one does not explicitly take oneself as one's object, unlike in reflection. Non-positional self-consciousness is not limited to episodes of perception, but rather occurs in any form of intentional consciousness that posits an object, such as desire.

It is this non-positional self-consciousness that I shall term the minimal sense of self.[21] Before I explore what the minimal sense of self is in more detail, I will consider the evidence that the infant possesses a minimal sense of self from birth.

Since non-positional self-consciousness is present in every instance of positional consciousness, to show that the infant has a minimal sense of self, one needs to show that the infant has positional consciousness. The classic example of positional consciousness is perception. Experimental studies have shown that infants are capable of sophisticated perception. Phillippe Rochat (2011) argues that newborn infants do not perceive the world as a 'blooming, buzzing confusion' (James 1890); their perceptions are already organised. According to Rochat, newborns see colours and readily process information about moving objects (more so than static objects). They display a preference for human faces, especially moving faces, areas of high visual contrast, high pitched sounds, and human voices speaking in baby talk or 'Parentese' (Goswami 2014, 11). Newborns like sweet tastes and dislike bitter ones. If a drop of sucrose is given to a newborn, this engages a complex system of functional behaviour. The infant brings her hand to her mouth and she uses her whole body to start 'rooting', searching for the breast. Rochat interprets this as the beginnings of a body schema, a map of one's own body. The infant draws on her body schema to coordinate her body in a functionally purposeful activity.

There is even evidence that foetuses are capable of perception by the third trimester. Studies have shown that foetuses are able to hear and distinguish voices, in particular their mother's voice (Goswami 2014). An experiment by DeCasper and Fifer (1980) observed the speed at

[21] The idea of a minimal sense of self has been explored at length by Dan Zahavi (2014; 2015). Zahavi's minimal self-awareness is possibly more minimal than my own notion, because it is present in all phenomenally conscious experiences (2011). My minimal sense of self only features in episodes of positional consciousness.

which newborn babies sucked a dummy. If the infants sucked faster, they heard their mother's voice reading a story; if they sucked slower, they heard a female stranger. Babies learnt to suck faster in order to hear their mothers. The following day, the set-up was reversed, and the infants correspondingly sucked slower in order to hear their mother's voice. In another experiment, expectant mothers read a story out loud each day during the final trimester. At birth, the infants were able to distinguish this story from a previously unheard story, and would suck a dummy faster in order to hear it (Kolata 1984). This suggests that late-stage foetuses are capable of auditory perception even from birth and thus positional consciousness, and therefore possess a minimal sense of self.

It could be objected that none of these examples in fact prove that the infant has positional consciousness. A robot could be programmed to display preferences for a particular woman's voice and to display rooting behaviour. What makes this evidence that the infant's consciousness is positional? In order to answer this question, one must consider what it is to have positional consciousness.

To have positional consciousness is to have intentional consciousness of a distinct object. Again, I shall consider the straightforward example of perception. In the Introduction of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre draws on the phenomenology of Husserl to analyse perception (BN, 4; Catalano 1985, 4) To perceive an object as physically distinct from oneself is for the object to be presented as exceeding any one of its appearances. When I look at an apple, I perceive it as an apple across a range of different appearances it might have. The apple's size, colour and shape fluctuate as I move around it. For example, when I look down straight onto the apple, it appears as a greenish-red circle with a darker patch in the centre, but I still recognise it as an apple and as connected to all the different

presentations that an apple can have. It appears to exceed any one of its presentations, and therefore it is presented as being more than just the perception I am having of it right now. I am conscious of it as a distinct object that transcends my experience. Therefore, one way of showing that the newborn has positional consciousness would be to investigate whether the newborn has perspectival perception. In the next section, 'The Ecological Sense of Self', I cite experimental evidence which shows that newborns do perceive from a perspective—namely, studies of their looming reactions (Neisser 1988, 38).

I do not pretend to have completely resolved the worry here. For one thing, I have only discussed visual perception. I have not shown that the auditory perception of the foetus counts as positional consciousness. However, this is a difficult problem to resolve, partly because any satisfactory response will have to contend with the asymmetry of first-person and third-person experience. We cannot ask the newborn if her consciousness is positional, as she is unable to speak. Instead, we can only observe her behaviour. So there will always be room to question whether the infant really has positional consciousness. Exploring this issue further will take me too far from the aim of my thesis, which is to show that authentic love is possible.

Let us accept for now that the infant, and possibly the late-stage foetus, has positional consciousness. I will now discuss why non-positional self-conscious constitutes a minimal sense of self.

Non-positional self-consciousness constitutes a minimal *sense of self* rather than a minimal self, because Sartre rejects that there is any self or 'I' that inheres in consciousness. He dismisses the idea of a substantial, ontologically independent subject; a homunculus that

persists through time and unifies conscious experience. '[B]y definition, no *self* or *itself* can inhabit consciousness.' (BN, 160). As we saw in Chapter 1, consciousness is just the activity of intending the world. It is not a container for images of the world; it is nothing but the awareness of its objects.

However, consciousness is not simply 'impersonal' contemplation (BN, 159). Rather, it is personalised by 'the fact of existing for oneself as self-presence.' (BN, 160). Consciousness is always present to itself as non-positional self-consciousness. For something to be present to something else entails a distance between them. Otherwise, the two things would not be present to each other but would rather merge into each other. Therefore, consciousness always exists at a distance from itself (BN, 128). It cannot coincide with itself and simply *be* consciousness. But the very non-positional self-consciousness that separates consciousness from itself also personalises it. Because of non-positional self-consciousness, I always have an immediate acquaintance with myself. Sartre illustrates this with an example in the Introduction. Suppose that I am idly gazing at some cigarettes. If someone asks me—how many cigarettes are there?—I would say there were a dozen. This counting need not be done at the level of positional consciousness. However, if someone had asked me at that moment what I was doing, I would answer 'I am counting'. This shows that non-positional self-consciousness is present in every episode of positional consciousness. Non-positional self-consciousness personalises consciousness, and is why I can identify myself and say what I was doing at all moments, including unreflective moments (BN, 11).

Non-positional self-consciousness is not a substantial self; rather, it is just a property of the activity that consciousness is (the intending of objects). Hence I refer to non-positional self-

consciousness as a minimal sense of self rather than a minimal self. This minimal sense of self is innate insofar as the infant is born capable of positional consciousness.

However, although Sartre denies that there is any self that inheres within consciousness, he does not deny that the self or 'ego' exists. The self exists, but only as an object for consciousness, not as something 'in' consciousness. '[T]he Ego appears to consciousness as a transcendent in-itself, as an existent of the human world and not as [something] *of* consciousness.' (BN, 159). The ego is 'transcendent' because it is external to consciousness (Webber 2009, 23). It is therefore not the 'I' or intending subject. '[W]e should say of the 'I'—which is quite incorrectly regarded as an inhabitant of consciousness—that it is the 'Me' of consciousness, but not that it is its own *self* or *itself*.' (BN, 160).

As the ego is not consciousness, it is not for-itself: 'the Ego does not belong to the domain of the for-itself.… [T]he Ego is in-itself, not for-itself.' (BN, 159). Sartre maintained this view up until near the end of his life, where he asserts that it is a 'fact' that the ego is outside of consciousness. It cannot inhere within consciousness because there is no such thing as 'within' consciousness (Schilpp 1981, 10-11). The ego includes our set of character traits and qualities, which are the results of the projects that we pursue. It can be altered by adopting different projects so, in this sense, the ego is self-constituted (Webber 2009, 24).[22] However, as we have seen, we also need the Look of the Other in order to possess qualities. It is only through viewing oneself as if one is the Other that one is able to assign oneself qualities. I will argue below that it is through the Other that infants learn to self-reflect. In my multidimensional account of self-understanding, I shall refer to the awareness of the ego

[22] Sartre claims that the ego is the product of impure reflection (BN, 229), which I shall discuss later on in this chapter.

as the ‘conceptual sense of self’. The conceptual sense of self forms part of the richer sense of self, and is therefore not present at birth.

The Ecological Sense of Self

So far, I have argued that there is a minimal sense of self that is present from birth—or possibly even before birth. This sense of self is the most fundamental because all it requires is that the infant has some form of positional consciousness, which could be perception, desire, or any other consciousness *of* an object. The ecological sense of self, which I shall now discuss, is less fundamental. This is because the ecological sense of self requires that the newborn be capable of perspectival perception, which is a more demanding requirement.

The ‘ecological’ sense of self is a term that is used by Ulric Neisser in his famous article, *Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge* (1988). This sense of self arises from the fact that human perception is perspectival. The chair appears to me as if it is presented from a particular point of view. Perception of the chair is therefore an implicit perception of myself because I am aware of the chair as appearing to me from the point of view that my body currently occupies. When I visually perceive objects and move about in the world, my position is revealed to me. For example, if I walk towards a wall, my location, posture, speed, and direction are revealed to me by my changing visual array. This is not explicitly observed in reflective consciousness but is rather a consequence of how objects appear in the world. Therefore, like the minimal sense of self, the ecological sense of self is a form of non-positional self-consciousness. The minimal sense of self is my awareness of not-being the object posited. The ecological sense of self, however, is my awareness of myself as occupying one unique point of view in any episode of perspectival perception.

There is experimental evidence that young infants have perspectival perception. Infants display looming reactions; behaviour in response to impending objects. This implies that they are aware of their own bodies as located in space and as an obstacle to other physical objects (Neisser 1988, 38). Ball and Tronick (1971) found that infants aged two to eleven weeks displayed head withdrawal and other avoidant behaviour when they perceived an impending collision. However, infants do not withdraw when they are shown an object which is moving away from them, or that is on a path that will miss them. Carroll and Gibson (1981) displayed an object with a window to 3-month-old infants. The infants were positioned under the object's window, such that they would avoid a collision. In this case, the infants did not flinch or otherwise show withdrawal when the object was shown to move towards them.

On the basis of these and other experiments, Neisser concludes that young infants perceive a world that is similar to that of the adult; a world of distinct, solid, and permanent objects. 'The old hypothesis that a young infant cannot tell the difference between itself and the environment, or between itself and its mother, can be decisively rejected.' (Neisser 1988, 40).

The Interpersonal Sense of Self

The final constituent of the basic sense of self is the interpersonal sense of self. I will briefly introduce it here before discussing it in more detail in the next section. As we shall see, this sense of self is crucial for the development of the more sophisticated forms of self-understanding.

The interpersonal sense of self arises from immediate, unreflective interaction with another person. According to Neisser, it 'appears from earliest infancy just as the ecological self does, is specified by species-specific signals of emotional rapport and communication: I am the person who is engaged, here, in this particular human interchange.' (1988, 36). Therefore, the interpersonal sense of self is closely related to what Sartre calls 'being-for-the Other' (BN, 366). Being-for-the-Other refers to the ontological dimension of myself for the Other—it is my existence as an object for the Other's consciousness (BN, 357). The interpersonal sense of self, however, refers to my awareness of myself as the object of the Other's consciousness (Ch. 1, 27).

The infant is not born with an interpersonal sense of self, but it emerges shortly after birth when the infant begins to interact with the Other. This sense of self is crucial to being human. As Sartre says in *Being and Nothingness*, we can conceive of a for-itself without being-for-the-Other, but it would not be human (BN, 384). However, the interpersonal sense of self is less fundamental than either the minimal or the ecological senses of self because it requires more of the infant's cognitive abilities—the infant must be capable of interpersonal interaction, which I shall demonstrate in the next section.

2. The infant develops a richer sense of self through her relationship with her mother

So far, I have argued that the young infant possesses a basic sense of self, which consists of the minimal, ecological, and interpersonal senses of self. I will now argue that the infant acquires a richer sense of self through her relationship with her mother. I shall first describe the senses of self that the young infant lacks, and then I will explain how these richer senses

of self are later acquired. At the end of this section, I will comment upon how the different forms of self-understanding are transformed throughout childhood and what persists into adulthood.

The Richer Sense of Self

The Extended Sense of Self

Newborn infants lack what Neisser calls an extended sense of self (1988, 36). The extended sense of self is one's awareness of oneself as persisting through time. It is '…based primarily on our personal memories and anticipations: I am the person who had certain specific experiences, who regularly engages in certain specific and familiar routines.' (1988, 36).[23]

Neisser claims that the extended sense of self is comprised of two elements: that which I remember having done (episodic recall) and that which I think of myself as doing regularly (script knowledge) (1988, 47). Children have good script knowledge by the age of 3 years old but the beginnings of episodic recall start even earlier. There is evidence of episodic recall from as young as 6 months. Infants who had participated in an experiment as 6-month-olds were brought back to participate in the same experiment as 2-and-a-half-year-olds. In the earlier experiment, infants had to reach in the dark for a Big Bird toy that made a noise. When the experiment was repeated, infants who had taken part in the earlier experiment were more accurate and faster at reaching for the toy than infants in the control group who had not taken part in the experiment before (Perris 1990).

[23] The extended sense of self is closely linked to, and arguably necessary for, what has come to be known as the autobiographical sense of self (Schectman 2011). This is the idea of the self as the permanent narrator of the story of one's life. I will discuss this at the end of the section.

However, although episodic recall may appear as early as 6 months, it has not been shown to be present at birth. I will later argue that it is through the relationship with the mother that the infant develops an extended sense of self.

The Private Sense of Self

Another sense of self which the newborn infant lacks is the private sense of self. According to Neisser, the private sense of self refers to one's understanding that the contents of one's experiences are exclusively one's own. It '…appears when children first notice that some of their experiences are not directly shared with other people: I am, in principle, the only person who can feel this unique and particular pain.' (1988, 36).

Although infants have a conscious mental life, they do not recognise the immediacy of their experiences as a feature that distinguishes their mental life from that of others. Sartre recognises this in *Saint Genet*, where he claims that young children believe that their mother can hear their very thoughts; a mother 'makes her child feel that she can read his mind, he thinks he is never alone.' (SG, 11). However, the child's belief is mistaken. One of the basic features of human reality that I have argued for in Chapter 2 is our ontological separation from the Other (BN, 319, 389). It is impossible for mother and child to form a joint subject where they have direct and unmediated access to each other's subjectivity. Rather, what the newborn infant lacks from birth is a reflective awareness of the asymmetric access that she and others have to her own conscious thought.

The child begins to acquire a private sense of self from around 9 months, as I shall argue below, but the awareness is not explicit until the age of 4 or 5. This is when children typically pass the 'secret test', which is taken as clear evidence of a private sense of self. 4-year-olds tested by Marvin et al. (1976) understood that, if person A and person B agree on something while person C is not looking, then C will not know it unless he is subsequently told about it. The children demonstrated that they grasped the asymmetric access of oneself and others to one's own consciousness.

The Conceptual Sense of Self

The conceptual sense of self is the final sense of self in my multidimensional account of self-understanding. I introduced it earlier in my discussion of the interpersonal sense of self. The conceptual sense of self is the awareness what Sartre calls the 'ego'. It includes our understanding of our qualities, character traits, social roles and identities, and memberships of social groups, as well as representations of one's own body (Neisser 1988, 40n8; Webber 2009, 27). This is not one's pre-reflective awareness of one's body as the point of view that I am, which is the ecological sense of self. Rather, it includes the ideas of how we believe our bodies appear to others, and all the value and disvalue that we ascribe to these features. Neisser adds that the conceptual sense of self includes concepts that we employ to talk about the self, such as the soul or mind. All of these different ideas form a 'network of assumptions and theories', according to Neisser, which the conceptual sense of self draws on (1988, 36). In sum, the conceptual sense of self is my idea of who I am and what kind of being I am, posited in reflective consciousness.

The conceptual sense of self is not present at birth. I will argue that it requires the objectification of the Other. When one later posits one's ego as an object in reflection, one can only do so by taking up the perspective of the Other.

Because the conceptual sense of self draws on a network of different representations, it is hard to pinpoint exactly when it is acquired. Neisser does not give an estimate as to when the conceptual sense of self is developed. Children seem to demonstrate understanding of social memberships at 3 and a half years old, giving siblings and friends preferential treatment over others (Olson and Spelke 2008). Goswami claims that, by around 28 months, children have an understanding of moral conformity and transgression—for example, they can describe themselves or someone else as 'naughty' (Goswami 2014, 60). Therefore, we can roughly estimate that the conceptual sense of self begins to form between the ages of 2 and 3.

Self-Reflection

Before I consider how these richer senses of self develop, I will describe two related phenomena which do not constitute the richer sense of self but are vital to its acquisition. These are self-reflection and a theory of mind.

In self-reflection, consciousness takes itself as its object. Suppose that I am driving and thinking only of pressing the pedals, turning the steering wheel and looking at the road, which are the objects of my positional consciousness. But I can also take my conscious experience itself as the object of my positional consciousness: 'Now I am turning the wheel' or 'Now I am seeing the road'. Reflection is possible because consciousness exists at a

distance from itself. If consciousness coincided with itself, then it would be unable to self-reflect, for reflection is a relation that requires two terms: one that reflects and that is one reflected-on.

The ability to self-reflect is not present at birth. The newborn infant cannot explicitly posit herself as an object in reflection.[24] Prior to the ability to self-reflect, the infant has no private sense of self because she has not reflected on her thoughts and realised that they are exclusively her own. The infant also lacks an ego and a conceptual sense of self insofar as this is partly constructed in self-reflection.

It might be objected against this view that a simple form of reflection is present from birth and that reflection need not be a high-level cognitive activity. Suppose that the infant touches her face and is aware of both being touched and doing the touching. This seems like a case of positional consciousness of her non-positional self-consciousness (she is conscious of herself doing the touching).

I am willing to concede that this example amounts to a basic kind of positional self-consciousness, but it is not the type of reflective self-consciousness that I am interested in. Touching one's face could result in a vague sense of one's agency, but the type of reflection that I am concerned with, the reflection that constructs the ego, seems to require language. Language is required for the infant to take herself, her thoughts, and her activities as the objects of reflection. The child psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) asserts that the acquisition of language is a pivotal moment in the development of the child. Words symbolise our

[24] A child may be able to objectify various body parts, for example, playing with a foot as a toy, but not awareness itself.

experiences and represent concepts. Once one can use language, one can represent one's own experiences to oneself, which enables one take them as objects of thought and to ponder them (Goswami 2014). Once this 'inner speech' has been acquired, children are able to reflect on what they know and how they know it. Their thoughts can now be symbolised and spoken about, rather than simply lived through (Goswami 2014).

It is this kind of reflection that underpins the ego and, since language is not present from birth, nor is this type of reflection. From now on, I will only be concerned with this more sophisticated type of reflection.

Theory of Mind

The newborn infant does not possess a theory of mind. By 'theory of mind', I mean something relatively innocuous: the child's awareness that the Other is a person, with her own mental life, which the child does not have immediate access to. One of the earliest uses of the term can be found in an article by Premack and Woodruff (1978). In their view, an individual has a theory of mind only if 'the individual imputes mental states to himself and to others (either to conspecifics or to other species as well).' (1978, 515). This is the sense in which I mean to use the term. A theory of mind is the child's positional consciousness of the Other as subject. It is her explicit idea of the Other as a conscious being like herself. It is not the child's immediate perception of the Other as a subject through awareness of herself as the object of the Other's Look. The theory of mind is not innate and is typically developed sometime between the ages of two and four (Neisser 1988, 45).

Sartre agrees that there is a period in infancy where the child interacts with the mother but does not yet explicitly recognise her as Other. For example, he claims that the need to be loved is present 'even before the child can recognize the Other' (FI, 1, 129). But he acknowledges that 'the Other is there, diffused, from the first day in that discovery I make of myself through my passive experience of otherness. That is, through the repeated handling of my body by forces which are alien, purposive, serving my needs.' (FI, 1, 129n2). The discovery that the infant makes of herself through a 'passive experience of Otherness' is what I have called the interpersonal sense of self—the infant's awareness of herself as the Other's object. Sartre seems to be suggesting that the infant possesses first an immediate awareness of the Other and interpersonal sense of self, which then develops later into an explicit theory of mind. This is the view that I shall advocate in the section below.

Acquiring a Richer Sense of Self through the Mother-Child Relationship

In this section, I argue that the richer sense of self, along with self-reflection and a theory of mind, develops through the infant's relationship with her mother. First, I describe the kinds of interactions that take place in early infancy. Through being the object of the Other's Look, the infant learns to self-reflect. Considering the phenomenon of joint attention, we shall then see how the private and conceptual senses of self, as well as the theory of mind, develop out of being the object of a Look. Interactions with the mother also help the infant to develop an extended sense of self. Finally, I will consider how the different senses of self fit together in my multidimensional model.

Learning to self-reflect

Experimental studies have shown that infants are capable of interacting with others mere hours after birth. Nagy and Molnar (2004) found that not only were newborns able to imitate adults' facial expressions, but they were also able to initiate an imitation game. The newborns adopted the expressions of the adults, seemingly to provoke a response from the experimenter (2004, 59). To the extent that these findings are robust, it seems like the interpersonal sense of self is present from birth. Even if these particular studies are flawed, there is other evidence that a very rich form of intersubjectivity' is present from the age of 2 months old (Neisser 1988, 42; Hobson, 2007, 270). The rich form of intersubjectivity that Neisser refers to is what has come to be known as 'protoconversation' (Nagy and Molnar 2004, 55). These are the first dialogues between mother and child.

Protoconversations typically start with a mutual look (Stern 1979). Mother-infant eye contact tends to be intense and prolonged, in contrast to the eye contact between adults. Adults rarely hold each other's gaze for more than 10 seconds. When adults talk, the listener tends to gaze at the speaker whilst the speaker looks away (Wider 2007). However, mothers and infants frequently have eye contacts up to and above 30 seconds during social interactions. These mutual gazes are interpreted by both as an invitation to communicate.

After the initial signal of eye contact, the mother will then respond with baby talk and exaggerated expressions. Then the dialogue begins, with a back-and-forth of expressions and vocalisations between mother and infant. If the conversation becomes overwhelming, the infant will cease eye contact and avert her head. An experienced mother will then ease off, reducing stimulation, and the interaction can be rescued.

Both infant and mother actively participate in protoconversations. If she chooses, the infant can initiate, amplify, de-intensify or shut down the interaction. According to Daniel Stern (1979), she invites the mother into these early interactions through calling attention to herself by fixating on the mother's gaze, with eye widening and brightening. She responds to the mother's utterances with her own smiles, coos, and body movements.

It is through these early interactions that the infant learns to self-reflect. In protoconversations, the infant is aware of herself as the object of another person's consciousness. Recall that to be aware of oneself as the object of another's person's consciousness is the 'interpersonal sense of self'. Neisser holds that the interpersonal sense of self is present in precisely these early interactions with the Other. As an awareness of oneself as the Other's object, the interpersonal sense of self is also an awareness of the Other. It is not, however, based on inference nor is it a knowledge claim—it is an immediate apprehension of the Other as minded.

As explored in Chapter 1, Sartre claims that the Other is the 'being through whom I gain my objecthood.' '[T]he Other reveals to me that it is impossible for me to be an object unless it is for another freedom…. If it must merely be possible for me to conceive any one of my properties in the objective mode, the Other is already given.' (BN, 369). I cannot be an object for myself because consciousness cannot coincide with itself. Positional consciousness is always conscious of not-being its object so, when I reflect, the consciousness-reflecting is conscious of itself as not-being the consciousness-reflected-on. But, for the Other, I am the object of his gaze. He does not experience the gap in my being, therefore it is possible for him to regard me as an object and give me labels that stick. When I subsequently reflect upon myself, I regard myself as if I were the Other: '[T]his pure subject whom I am unable,

by definition, *to know*—i.e. to posit as an object—is always *there*, out of reach and without distance, when I try to grasp myself as an object.' (BN, 369).

As the mother is the first Other to the child, it is the mother who gives the infant her ability to self-reflect. Through the mother's Look, the infant experiences itself as an object, internalises the gaze and then is able to self-reflect.

I do not mean to claim here that the achievement of self-reflection is an immediate or one-off event. Rather, it is an ongoing process, where the infant learns how to reflect by practicing it and actually doing it.

I also stand by my earlier claim that language is needed for sophisticated self-reflection. What I mean to argue is that the Look of the Other prepares me to start using language in the relevant way. As the infant acquires more vocabulary, she can embellish her ego in self-reflection. In any case, the claim that reflection requires language involves the Other in the infant's development of self-reflection more and not less. Language is for others, and would not exist without them (Avramides 2001).

Theory of mind and the private, conceptual, and extended senses of self

I will now show how the private and conceptual senses of self, and theory of mind, develop out of being the object of a Look. In order to demonstrate this, I shall describe another phenomenon of early infancy, joint attention.

Joint attention is known as the ‘nine-month miracle’ (Tomasello 1995). At 9 months old, the infant now understands an adult’s gestures as an invitation to share with her in attending to the same object. When the adult, involved in a conversation with the child, points her finger to an object, the child does not look at the finger, but now looks in the direction to which the finger is pointing. The infant begins to gesture at objects in return, in order to invite the adult to attend to them with her. Once children are able to jointly attend, they do not just direct their attention to other objects and individuals that appear to exist separately in their environment. Instead, they start to see objects from the perspective of the other person.

It has also been argued that infants even as young as 2 or 3 months are capable of joint attention. Such infants are able to jointly attend with the adult to the infant herself (Reddy 2003). Reddy observes that infants of 2 months old smile more when adults make eye contact and less when they look away. Infants also display coy reactions to renewals of attention, for example, intense smiling, brief gaze and head aversion. Reddy argues that this suggests a rudimentary awareness of the Other as an intending being, a subject.

To invite someone to attend to an object with you suggests that you are aware that they do not have immediate access to your mental life. Therefore, joint attention indicates the beginnings of a private sense of self. The private sense of self, combined with self-reflection, can form the basis of a theory of mind. If the infant gestures to the adult to invite her to attend to an object, this demonstrates that the infant understands that the adult has her own mental life that the infant lacks immediate access to, and that this is why the infant must externalise her intentions in sight and sound to communicate her experiences to the adult. As the child comes to reflect on this, this develops into a positional consciousness of the Other as a subject—in other words, a theory of mind.

The conceptual sense of self arises from an awareness of the Other as a subject, combined with the ability to self-reflect. As discussed earlier, the conceptual sense of self is one's awareness of one's ego—myself as an object posited in reflection. It is not our immediate recognition of ourselves as an object of the Other's consciousness, which is the interpersonal sense of self. Instead, it is our positional consciousness of ourselves as a certain kind of person, with certain qualities and social identities. As the infant acquires a theory of mind, this strengthens the infant's burgeoning conceptual sense of self. To be aware of the Other as having a private mental life and intending objects in the environment entails that the Other is also capable of having an opinion on you. One gradually starts to acquire an idea of one's personal qualities through the Other's opinion of oneself. In addition, one begins to acquire some of the concepts that we use to understand consciousness and selfhood. For example, the Other has direct and privileged access to her own mental states, just like I do, so this becomes part of our understanding of what it is to be minded.

I do not wish to claim that the richer senses of self emerge all at one. Rather, these changes in self-understanding are a gradual process. The infant practises pointing at objects and, through repeatedly engaging in joint attention, she comes to have an appreciation of the mother as minded. From this, the private and conceptual senses of self and a theory of mind emerge.

The extended sense of self also develops out of the mother and infant's interactions with each other. There is experimental evidence that children build stronger memories with greater detail when they interact with their mothers. If children are asked about what they did and then the adult elaborates on the information provided by the child, the child will

develop a better memory and do so more quickly (McGuigan and Salmon 2004). Whilst this does not show that the mother plays a necessary role in the acquisition of an extended sense of self, it does suggest that she can help to strengthen it.

Similar views to what I have argued here can be found in Sartre's biographies. Sartre seems to agree that self-reflection and a theory of mind are not present at birth, but are rather achievements of development. The child becomes an individual through the intervention of adults. For example, in *Saint Genet*, young Jean Genet becomes aware of himself as an individual through being caught stealing. Before he was caught, when he stole, he did not recognise himself stealing. He had only a non-positional self-consciousness of himself whilst stealing, rather than a reflective awareness of his actions. After being caught, he posits himself in reflection and recognises himself as an individual:

> "Guilt," [Genet] will write later, "gives rise, first, to individuality." Beneath the accusing finger, it is all one, for the little thief, to discover that he is himself and that he is other than all. And no doubt many people have testified to the fact that around the age of ten, they discovered their individuality with amazement or anguish. (SG, 22).

According to Sartre, it is at the age of ten that children become aware of their individuality. The child recognises himself as a certain kind of person—a thief. Thinking of oneself as a thief is part of the conceptual sense of self. Therefore, it is being caught stealing that grants Genet his conceptual sense of self—he adopts the perspective of the Other and posits himself as an object in reflection.

In *Baudelaire*, it his mother's second marriage that brings about Baudelaire's awareness of himself as an individual (B, 17-18). Each child experiences 'the fortuitous and shattering advent of self-consciousness' (B, 19). The child realises that she is a unique individual but,

at the same time, an individual just like everybody else is an individual. This could be read as the development of a theory of mind and a conceptual sense of self. The child realises that she is a conscious subject, but also that all other people are conscious subjects, too.

The Multidimensional Model

In summary, I have argued that there exists a basic sense of self from birth, which consists of the minimal, ecological, and interpersonal senses of self. The interpersonal sense of self is the experience of oneself as an object of the Other's consciousness. It is through being aware of oneself as the object of the Other's consciousness that we learn how to self-reflect, for in reflection we take up the perspective of the Other and direct it upon ourselves. Interacting with the Other and being the object of a Look gives rise to the private, conceptual, and extended senses of self, as well as a theory of mind.

The minimal and ecological senses of self are retained throughout adult life. They are both forms of non-positional self-consciousness. The minimal sense of self is the most fundamental. It is the awareness of myself as not-being the object of my positional consciousness. The ecological sense of self is my awareness of myself as occupying a particular point of view, which is present in all cases of perception.

As we mature, the interpersonal sense of self is replaced by the conceptual sense of self. When we interact with the Other, we no longer have an immediate awareness of ourselves as the Other's object, but instead become conscious of the ego. The Look makes me aware of myself as having certain qualities and social identities. For example, when my tutor addresses me, I become aware of myself as a graduate student and as 'lazy' or 'clever', or

‘shy’ or ‘chatty’, accordingly. The awareness of myself that the Other gives me will accord with some aspect of my ego, such that it fits into the holistic network of beliefs that I have about myself.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Sartre claims that to think of oneself as an object in this way is impure reflection (BN, 229). In impure reflection, I take my ego to be a fixed nature that determines my behaviour. When my tutor looks at me, I instantly recognise myself as lazy, because I believe that laziness is part of my fixed nature. I reject the idea that I can change my qualities and social identities by adopting different projects. As I shall argue in the next two chapters, we are all socialised into this form of reflection as children in order to prevent us from asserting our freedom.

The extended sense of self is also transformed in adult life. It becomes what is known as the autobiographical sense of self—the idea of oneself as the permanent narrator of one’s life story, extending from the past and into the future (Schectman 2011). The private sense of self becomes part of the conceptual sense of self. The immediacy of one’s own conscious experience becomes part of our concept of what it is to have a self, and thus part of our network of beliefs about the kind of beings that we are.

3. Before the infant develops a richer sense of self, she exists in an ambiguous union with her mother

So far in this chapter, I have argued that the infant possesses a basic sense of self from birth and that she acquires a richer sense of self through her relationship with her mother. Now I wish to return to the period before the infant has developed a richer sense of self, where I

propose that the mother and infant exist in an ambiguous union. I will begin this section by rejecting an alternative understanding of the early mother-child relationship, which I shall call the 'ontological union'. I will then elaborate on the idea of the ambiguous union, focusing on the special type of Look that exists between mother and child, which I argue is non-conflictual. Finally, I will consider five features of the ambiguous union: dialogue, shared emotions, fluid boundaries between bodies, touch, and conflict.

The Myth of the Ontological Union

The ontological union is the idea that the mother and young infant form a joint subject. It is therefore an instance of what Sartre calls the 'We-subject' (BN, 557); a plural, first-person point of view. It cannot be the case that the self/Other distinction completely disappears in the ontological union. The mother, as an adult, is aware that she is a separate person to the child. So the idea of the ontological union is more accurately that mother and child are periodically joint subjects of one and the same experience, and that the infant has no separate sense of self apart from her mother.

Sartre himself sometimes speaks as if there is an ontological union between mother and child, despite his claims in *Being and Nothingness* that a We-subject is impossible. For example, in *Words*, Sartre describes how his mother was once looked at by a man in a predatory manner. He recalls his experience of both him and his mother becoming a single subject: 'I caught his mad look and Anne-Marie and I quickly became a single terrified young girl who sprang backwards…. I sensed his desire through Anne-Marie; through her, I learned to scent the male, to fear and loathe him.' (W, 137). Similarly, in *Baudelaire*, Sartre describes the young Baudelaire as feeling united in body and soul to his mother in a primitive

mystical relationship (B, 16). Baudelaire's realisation that he is separate from his mother is painful, an 'abrupt revelation' (B, 18).

The ontological union has been the focus of many feminist philosophers, including Luce Irigaray (Stone 2006), Julia Kristeva (1989), Jessica Benjamin (1988) and Nancy Chodorow (1978). Benjamin is highly critical of the notion of an ontological union, as she argues that it idealises the father and denies the mother's subjectivity. She attributes the view to the psychoanalytic theory of both Freud and Margaret Mahler (1988, 17-18). In what follows, I will reconstruct an account of the ontological union in psychoanalysis, centring on Freud's idea of the Oedipus complex (LaPlanche and Pontalis 1983, 282), where the infant makes the traumatic discovery that he is not in fact one with the mother. To simplify matters, I will only discuss the experience of the young boy.

In the pre-Oedipal stage, the child has not yet differentiated himself from the mother (LaPlanche and Pontalis 1983, 328; Weedon 1987, Ch. 3). The young boy develops an unconscious sexual desire for his mother, but he is prompted to abandon this desire due to fear of his father. He fears that his father will castrate him if he discovers his son's desire. The young boy observes the genitals of his sisters and concludes that they must have already been castrated. Out of fear, the boy relinquishes his desire for his mother and turns to identify with the father. This identification with the father is necessary for the boy to confirm his gender identity and adopt a male heterosexual sexuality. The boy will later project his desire for his mother onto his adult female partners.

This is not just a theory about how the child comes to identify himself as a 'boy', but also about how the child gains a sense of self. Through the Oedipus complex, the ego and

superego (the rational parts of the psyche) establish their authority over the unconscious, irrational id. The fear of castration that separates the child from the mother makes him realise that he is an individual in society. The father introduces the child to the norms of society through enforcing the incest taboo. Therefore, the father symbolises law, order, and morality, whereas the mother symbolises irrationality and undifferentiation (Benjamin 1988, 183).

For the young girl, separation from the mother is even more painful. The girl has to identify with the mother in order to assume her gender identity but, at the same time, she must separate from the mother to acquire a separate sense of self. 'For man and for woman the loss of the mother is a biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous.' (Kristeva 1989, 27). The child must commit a figurative matricide in order to free herself from the mother and emerge as a distinct self. Matricide individuates the child from a 'confusional' love (1989, 28); in other words, a love where two people are confused in an ontological union. Conceptualised as 'matricide', separation is always painful. Firstly, it involves 'killing' the loved mother and, secondly, separation requires leaving behind the ontological union.

I reject the notion of an ontological union between mother and infant for three reasons. Firstly, this view conflicts with the phenomenological description of the mother-child relationship that I have presented in this chapter. Secondly, a joint subject is impossible. Thirdly, the myth of the ontological union is harmful to women.

To start with my first objection, I hope to have shown in this chapter that there exists a basic sense of self from birth. Therefore, there is never any experience of being a joint subject

with another consciousness. In every instance of positional consciousness, there is a non-positional consciousness of myself which personalises consciousness. Furthermore, as I have described it, it is through the relationship with the mother that the infant acquires the richer senses of self, not through separating from her. I have drawn on findings in developmental psychology to support this point.

My second objection to the idea of the ontological union is that a joint subject is impossible, a point which I argued in the previous chapter (Ch. 2, 70). Joint subjectivity is impossible because the two subjects would form a single intending consciousness and therefore lose any sense of being two subjects together; they would instead become a single subject.

My third objection to the ontological union is not so much a definitive case against the ontological one-ness of mother and child but a reason to be sceptical: the idea of the ontological union has been harmful to women. When one discovers that a notion in philosophy upholds patriarchal domination, one ought to be sceptical of it because it is highly probable that it is biased. The idea is likely to have only a partial comprehension of the matter, if any comprehension at all. I will now explain the ways in which the myth of the ontological union has harmed women.

Firstly, the myth of the ontological union forgets that the mother is a separate subject from the child. This forgetting of the mother is also present in how pregnant women are described in modern society. Florentien Verhage criticises how mother and foetus are conceived of as existing in an undifferentiated symbiosis, before birth tears them apart. According to Verhage, modern medicine treats the mother as a mere empty vessel for the foetus—in an ultrasound, the foetus is viewed as if it is in some inanimate cave or chamber. This attitude

is reflected throughout wider society, and is why random strangers will come up to the woman and touch her belly in the street. They think themselves to be touching the baby, who is wholly fused with the mother, rather than the pregnant woman (Verhage 2013).

The mother is a frightening figure in psychoanalysis because there is the threat of being engulfed in her. The threat of engulfment has been used to subjugate motherhood to fatherhood. As we have seen, the infant becomes an independent subject only through breaking with the mother. It is the father who is responsible for inducting the infant into morality and society. This cultural 'birth' of the infant supplants her physical birth, such that even the moment of birth is appropriated by the father (Zakin 2011). The maternal line is forgotten as the infant takes the father's name (Stone 2008).

Patriarchy uses the supposed threat of engulfment as motivation for the subordination of women. To escape the danger of engulfment, the child must objectify the mother in order to assert his own subjectivity (Benjamin 1988). Hence patriarchy confines woman to the status of object/slave, in contrast to man as subject/master.

In my account of the mother-child relationship, I have argued that the richer sense of self is acquired through interactions with the mother as the primary caregiver. The infant does not gain awareness of her independent being through the intervention of a paternal figure, but through her continuing dialogue with her mother. This is not to deny the existence of the Oedipus complex but to claim that it is not a necessary condition of developing a richer sense of self.

If the richer senses of self are not acquired through the Oedipus complex, it becomes possible to portray the child's growing independence as joyful rather than painful. It is the infant's acquisition of a richer sense of self which enables her to have a 'relationship' with the mother in the strictest sense of the term: a personal, reciprocal, diachronic interaction between two separate individuals. The myth of the ontological union has no room for this mature relationship because the mother is (figuratively) killed. Because of this and the objections I have listed above, I propose that the idea of the ontological union ought to be rejected, and shall move on to discuss my own account of the mother-child relationship as an ambiguous union.

The Ambiguous Union

The ambiguous union describes the relationship between mother and infant during the period before the infant has acquired a richer sense of self. The relationship is not ambiguous in the sense that it lacks a distinction between self and other, or in that the distinction is sometimes experienced and at other times not. Rather, the union is ambiguous in two ways. Firstly, this union does not have one obvious meaning—it is neither the ontological union, nor is it the mature distinction between self and other. Secondly, the infant's understanding of a distinction between self and other is not fully decided, but is rather in a process of becoming fully conceptualised. The infant is also in a state of becoming with regard to the self—a process of moving from a minimal sense of self towards a richer sense of self.

The ambiguous union begins in the late stages of pregnancy and starts to become less ambiguous from around 9 months old, with the advent of joint attention. Although she possesses an interpersonal sense of self, the infant lacks the private and conceptual senses

of self and a theory of mind. Thus she experiences herself as an object for the Other, but does not posit herself as an object for herself, nor does she explicitly reflect on the difference between self and other. Therefore, although mother and child never form a joint subject, the infant experiences the distinction between self and other as ambiguous. In addition, both mother and infant grasp each other as ambiguously subject and object. The next section will list the features of their relationship in which this ambiguity is realised.

My account of the mother-child relationship seeks a middle way between two opposed conceptions of child development (Zahavi 2014). It denies that the self is completely socially constructed because it holds that a basic sense of self is present from birth. It also denies that the infant must posit the distinction between self and other entirely on her own. Instead, I maintain that the child develops a richer sense of self through her relationship with her mother.

The Look Between Mother and Child

A key constitutive feature of the ambiguous union is the Look between mother and child. I shall discuss this Look in more detail, before moving on to explore the different phenomena in which the ambiguity of this relationship is realised.

To recall from Chapter 1, Sartre claims that the Look between adults is alienating. The Look suggests that I am free, which I experience as an anti-value from within the God-project. The Look is also alienating insofar as I am seeking a fixed nature that has necessary existence, as it reveals to me that I am reliant on the Other to give me a fixed nature, but then my fixed nature is not self-caused. Finally, the Look is alienating because I desire to

have a fixed nature but also remain conscious, but the fixed nature I get from the Other is too fixed—and in this sense, consciousness is degraded. The alienation of the Look leads me to Look at the Other in an attempt to objectify her, the result of which is a cycle of endless conflict (BN, 564).

However, from within the ambiguous union, the Look is not experienced as either alienating or degrading. I will argue that instead the Look between mother and child is loving, comprehending and mirroring.

I shall begin with the loving Look. It is true of every Look that the Other's subjectivity is revealed through an awareness of oneself as the object of the Other's consciousness. The mother-child Look is no exception. The mother's Look gives the infant an outside, a sense of being situated in the world and viewable. Sartre is of the same opinion. In *Saint Genet*, he claims that, for a child, to exist is to be seen by adults (SG, 15). I agree that it is through being the object of the mother's Look that the infant gets a sense of existing in the world.

However, the mother's Look does not make the infant aware of herself as just a mere object in the world among others; rather, she experiences herself as the loved object of her mother's consciousness. This is the view propounded by Sartre in *The Family Idiot*. To experience oneself as a loved object does not require a prior theory of mind, where one grasps the Other as a subject that is capable of loving. According to Sartre, the infant experiences herself as a loved object because her parents give her the impression that she is the source of all goodness and meaning in the world. The infant experiences her parents as utterly devoted to her, delighted to fulfil her every need and marvelling at how wonderful she is. 'This monster is an absolute monarch, always an end, never a means' (FI, 1, 129n2). The infant pursues a

project of being the unique means for her parents, whose aim is to idolise her. She lives for her parents and considers her existence to be a gift for them. She is assured that her generous gift will be met with reciprocal generosity. (FI, 1, 134).

Recognising herself as the loved object of the mother's consciousness gives the infant a sense of being valuable. 'If the mother loves him, in other words, he gradually discovers his self-object as his love object. A subjective object for himself through an increasingly manifest other, he becomes a value in his own eyes as the absolute end of habitual processes.' (FI, 1, 129n2). This will enable the infant to choose to live authentically as an adult. According to Sartre, the authentic individual realises that she herself is the sole source of values in her world and responsible for all of her choices. But being able to actively create values as an adult requires that the infant experience herself as valuable for her parents. This parental love gives the infant a mandate to live (FI, 1, 133). If the child recognises the purposelessness of the human condition too early, she will be unable to become an active agent in later life. So Sartre concludes, let the infant experience this sovereignty at 3 months old. She will never experience this again, or ever forget it. Even when faced with misfortune, she will remain optimistic, certain of her own value (FI, 1, 129-130). The temporality of the loved child will always have a teleological structure. She will always aim towards the next project and her life will have a purpose. Love assures the infant that, as an agent, there always is something worth doing.[25]

Therefore, the infant does not experience the mother's Look as degrading because it elevates her. Although she experiences herself as the object of the mother's consciousness, she is a

[25] It appears as if Sartre argues that the infant manages to achieve the God-project that is sought in romantic love. Whilst this may be a correct interpretation of *The Family Idiot*, I argue that this is not in fact the infant's project in Chapter 4 (166-8).

special, loved object and a source of value. The loving Look also reveals the mother's subjectivity, for the infant is the object of a subject's love.

The mother's Look is also loving in another respect, one that is closer to the definition of love as it appears in the *Notebooks* (NE, 508). Sara Ruddick (1990) describes the Look of the mother as 'scrutinising', reaching out into the world to foresee potential dangers to the child's physical existence. The mother thereby gives value to the infant's body by making it her aim to protect it. Her protection makes precious the infant's bodily vulnerability.[26]

The second reason why the Look is not experienced as alienating or degrading is because mother and child mutually comprehend each other's free subjectivity through their objecthood. The Look is our original awareness of the Other, as I have argued earlier. But, as the infant begins to acquire a positional consciousness of the Other as subject through protoconversation, mutual comprehension becomes possible. This then colours the Look between mother and child—when each looks at the other, they comprehend each other as an objectified freedom, a subject who is currently the object of a Look.[27] I shall explain how this is possible below.

To recall from earlier, 'comprehension' is Sartre's term for our ability to apprehend the Other as a free subject through his objecthood. I perceive the Other's actions as the products of a human subject's intentions (Cannon 1991, 101). I comprehend the unity of his movements that make the whole sequence of behaviour into an intentional action (PM, 153).

[26] It might be objected that the loving Look still leads to conflict because it reveals the infant's own radical freedom. However, at this young age, the infant has yet to be socialised into bad faith, a point which I shall argue in the next chapter.
[27] The mother is able to comprehend the infant without being alienated by her freedom because the mother is not following the God-project. I shall show that this is the case in the next chapter.

Comprehension is not contemplative but sympathetic (NE, 276). Through apprehending the Other's situation, one identifies with the Other's freedom and empathises with it. The Other's intentions are not merely perceived, but also taken up.

In the *Notebooks*, the occasion of comprehension is the appeal for help (NE, 274). However, as in *What is Literature?*, I argue that comprehension of the Other as a subject can occur through communication. The infant does not yet experience relations with others as conflictual, because the Look does not alienate or degrade her, but rather elevates her into a loved object. Therefore the infant does not experience freedom as an anti-value and so is willing to comprehend freedom without objectifying it. In the next chapter, I will expand on this argument and also show why the mother is not following the God-project. For now, I will describe comprehension as it occurs in communication between mother and child.

Mutual comprehension takes place in protoconversations, where both mother and child treat each other as an active partner and minded. In communication, the speaker addresses the listener as a subject, and the listener apprehends the speaker as a subject when speaker addresses him. It has been observed that mothers perceive their babies as subjects with intentions from an early age. At 3 and a half weeks old, the infant starts to focus on her mother's face and can engage in focused eye contact. John Bowlby, in his seminal work on attachment (1971), observes that mothers report a difference in their babies at this time. They say, 'Now he can see me', or 'Now he is fun to play with' (Wolff 1963), suggesting that the mothers now think that the infant has mental states and can perceive them.

To comprehend the mother in return, infants must perceive the Other as a subject with intentions. This ability is arguably in place by the advent of joint attention, where the infant

invites the adult to attend to an object with her. In joint attention, the infant must be capable of picking up the adult's intentions. She must realise that the mother's gaze and gestures indicate what mother is currently perceiving, and can extend an invitation to the infant to share in the mother's perception.

This ability of the child to pick up the adult's intentions is acknowledged by Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the infant is able to grasp the Other's intentions before she possesses an explicit conception of the Other by taking up the Other's movements in her own body. A 15-month-old baby will mouth a biting gesture if an adult pretends to bite the baby's fingers:

> The fact is that its own mouth and teeth, as it feels them from the inside, are immediately, for it, an apparatus to bite with, and my jaw, as the baby sees it from the outside, is immediately, for it, capable of the same intentions. 'Biting' has immediately, for it, an intersubjective significance. It perceives its intentions in my body, and my body with its own, and thereby my intentions in its own body…. (PP, 410).

Sartre similarly suggests that the infant is able to immediately grasp the Other's intentions In *The Family Idiot*:

> If the mother speaks to him, he grasps the *intention* before the language; let her smile at him, he recognizes the expression even before the face. His little world is crossed by shooting stars which *signal* to him and whose importance is chiefly to *consecrate* maternal actions to him. (FI, 1, 129n2).

Although the infant cannot understand what the mother is saying to him, he grasps what she intends to communicate through speech.

In return, the mother immediately comprehends the infant's communicative intentions. More than this, she helps the infant to achieve her communicative goals. Suppose that the baby is making noises and reaching for a toy that the mother is playing with. Up until this point, they have been engaged in a game that involves conversation and joint attention to the toy. The mother must comprehend what the baby is trying to communicate and help her to achieve her goal, by handing her the toy.

The comprehending Look dominates early infancy because mothers and children are not completely closed off from each other's subjectivity in the ambiguous union. Although they do not form a joint subject, the distinction between self and other is not fully decided, as we shall see when we consider the various features of the ambiguous union in the next section.

To repeat, I am not challenging my earlier claim that it is the Look that is our original awareness of the Other as subject. The comprehension of protoconversation is only a secondary phenomenon. The infant's first awareness of the Other as a subject is through experiencing herself as the loved object of the mother's Look. The infant then comprehends the mother as a subject when she addresses the mother in protoconversation or joint attention.

The third feature of the Look between mother and child is that it is a mirroring or reciprocal Look. It is a call, a desire, a reaching out towards the Other (Colombel 1981, 136-7). The infant wants both to see and be seen by the mother. But she does not simply want to be the object of a Look—she wants to respond, and furthermore she appeals to the mother as subject to respond to her in return. One can observe the desire to be mirrored in

protoconversations, where mother and infant reflect each other's emotions and expressions, exaggerating and amplifying them.

Sartre recognises the desire of the young infant to be mirrored by his mother. In *The Family Idiot*, he argues that the mother needs to smile back at the infant, to respond to her gurgles with baby talk, in order for the child to be introduced to reciprocity (FI, 1, 130). Without this experience of mirroring, the child will struggle to communicate with others and therefore be hindered in her later reciprocal relations, such as romantic love. The child's first desires for nourishment and tenderness need to be mirrored back to her by the mother's caress, in order for the infant to feel loved (FI, 1, 132-3). 'Love gives, awaits, receives—there is a reciprocity of designation. Without this fundamental bond, the child is a signified without being a signifier.' (FI, 1, 143). Without mirroring, the child does not point beyond herself. She is inert, an in-itself; the object of a caress without being a reciprocal participant in it.

The need for mirroring is illustrated by the plight of Gustave Flaubert. Gustave's mother, Caroline, did not mirror him. 'Gustave is immediately conditioned by the mother's indifference; he desires alone, his first sexual and alimentary impulses towards a nurturing flesh are not *mirrored* back to him by a caress.' (FI, 1, 132-3). Caroline did not make attempts to communicate with Gustave as an infant. She did not speak to him in baby talk. 'Above all, the mother, timid and cold, doesn't smile, or rarely, doesn't babble – why make speeches to a baby who can't understand?' (FI, 1, 130) Gustave is therefore unaware of reciprocity (FI, 1, 151) and later struggles to communicate with others (FI, 1, 131).

Developmental psychology is in agreement with Sartre over the importance of early communication. The famous psychologist and psychoanalyst, D. W. Winnicott, insists that the baby needs mirroring. The baby needs to be witnessed by its mother in order to gain its own sense of self. Neglect leads to emptiness and a lack of personality, which one may try to conceal with an invented false self (Cannon, 1991). In many ways, this is similar to what Gustave suffered. According to Sartre, he was left with a passive constitution (FI, 1, 37). The world appeared boring and monotonous to him, without any possible projects. Thus Gustave feels like he has no future. He feels like pure contingency: meaningless and directionless (FI, 1, 135-7).

In summary, it is by virtue of these three features that the Look between mother and child is not alienating or degrading. However, as we shall see in Chapter 5, it is not possible to maintain this happy existence forever. As we are socialised into bad faith, the Look takes on its mature character as conflictual. Chapter 5 will give an account of how the loving Look comes to be supplanted by the alienating Look described in *Being and Nothingness*.

Features of the Ambiguous Union

I will now explore the features of the ambiguous union that constitute its ambiguity, and one feature that is a consequence of its ambiguity. These include dialogue, shared emotions, fluid bodily boundaries, touch, and positive conflict.

Dialogue

In dialogue, mother and child are given to each other as ambiguous beings, both subject and object. Dialogue is impossible in the ontological union. It is a communicative exchange between two subjects, and therefore requires a distinction between self and other. In the ontological union, there is only one joint subject. Ambiguous union preserves the self/other distinction because the infant has a basic sense of self from birth. This makes dialogue between mother and child ontologically possible.

Dialogue takes place in the ambiguous union through protoconversations, as I have discussed above. In protoconversations, mother and infant time and match their expressions and vocalisations with each other. Both are active partners in the interaction, with the power to shut down or initiate, and to amplify or de-intensify. Each is aware of themselves as a subject, in speaking to the Other, but also of the Other as a subject, in listening to the Other. Both mother and child become aware of their ambiguous existence as both subject and object, insofar as they alternate between speaking and being spoken to.

The reciprocal turn-taking of dialogue is present from earliest infancy. Newborn babies have been observed to be capable of taking turns. In both breastfeeding and bottle feeding, the infant starts and stops her sucking. When the baby stops, the mother 'jiggles' the baby to resume feeding. The baby does not need to pause to breathe or swallow—she is capable of sucking continuously. So the jiggling-sucking pattern is thought to be an early example of turn-taking (Goswami 2014). Furthermore, mothers are quiet whilst the baby is sucking, but touch and talk to the baby when sucking ceases. They seem to be waiting for an imagined response from the baby (Newson 1977).

Shared Emotions

Another key constitutive feature of the ambiguous union is that emotions are shared between mother and infant. By 'shared', I mean that the emotions are separately owned but jointly constructed.[28] Therefore, as I shall explain, I am not claiming that the mother and infant are the joint subject of one and the same emotion. However, due to being jointly constructed, the emotion is experienced as ambiguously self and other.

According Joel Krueger (2013, 515), young infants have poor attention control. As a result, adults often regulate the infant's attention. An example of this lack of attentional control is sticky fixation. Sticky fixation occurs when the infant cannot stop paying attention to an object. Unable to break her gaze, the infant will then start crying, which ends the fixation as the infant is then picked up and moved (Goswami 2014). However, infants are not completely lacking in attentional control; rather, phenomena like sticky fixation are due to the infant's attention being exogenous (Merritt et al. 2013). What this means is that the attention of the newborn is rich in quality but they cannot direct their attention themselves. Mothers scaffold the infant's attention, directing them and inhibiting irrelevant 'noise'. We have already seen an example of this in breastfeeding, where the mother maintains the infant's attention on feeding by jiggling it to resume sucking.

The newborn's attention is relevant to the phenomenon of shared emotion is because we can regulate our emotions (intensify or lessen them) by choosing what we attend to. One way to do this to manipulate features of our environment. For example, if I am sad and I listen to a

[28] See Krueger, 2013; Michele Merritt, Somogy Varga & Joel Krueger, 2013; Krueger, 2015; Krueger, 2014a; Kruger, 2014b

sad song, this will make me feel sadder. We can enter into a relation of ongoing engagement with the environment, where we get the environment to do some of the work of regulating our emotions. If I lose myself in the music, I will allow myself to become either less sad or sadder, depending on the melody of the song (Krueger 2014a, 538).

The mother directs the infant's attention in order to amplify the infant's positive affect. Krueger claims that positive affect in infants can only emerge through the mediation of an adult caregiver. Because infants lack inner control of attention, the infant requires the mother's emotional and finely tuned responses in order to feel joy and elation. In contrast, the infant is capable of experiencing heightened negative affect all by herself, as demonstrated in crying. This is supported by Stern (1979), who argues that when laughter occurs at sometime between 4 and 8 months, it is always exogeneous—it is always in response to an external event.[29]

The mother amplifies the positive affect of the infant through a process called 'emotional entrainment' (Krueger 2014a 541). Entrainment describes two or more independent processes synchronising with each other, which is what happens in the case of shared emotions. Both mother and infant experience ongoing feedback from each other. If the infant laughs, this will affect the emotion that the mother feels and she will respond accordingly. Krueger describes this as a two-way relation of reciprocal causation. 'Their respective entrainment responses will thus bring both to one another in a kind of ongoing mutually modulatory relation.' (Krueger 2015, 272). The character of the emotion evolves through this interaction, so the phenomenology of the emotion is jointly constructed, although each

[29] See also Kathleen Wider (2007, 15).

still ‘owns’ the emotion individually. The emotion is created together, but mother and child each experience the emotion separately.

Krueger uses the term ‘mutual affect regulation’ to describe when one participant communicates their positive affect to the Other, leading to a feedback loop where the emotion is continually heightened. This is what was described in protoconversations—the mother smiles at the baby, who returns her smile, so the mother smiles even wider, which heightens the emotion felt by both, and so on. This is how the young infant’s experience of positive emotion is produced.

The Body

In the ambiguous union, the body is experienced as ambiguous. The mother apprehends her body as both object and subject during pregnancy. Then, after the child is born, the boundaries between bodies can open up to incorporate the Other. This is not to claim that the boundaries between subjects are blurred—the mother and child do not have joint experiences.

The boundaries between bodies are fluid due to the ecological sense of self. The ecological sense of self, which emerges from what is perceived in the environment, can open up to include anything that is carried with you or carries you. For example, suppose that one borrows a friend’s car. Whilst one is driving it, another car runs into the vehicle. One would typically say: ‘he ran into *me*’. This phrase shows how readily we incorporate objects that travel with us into our ecological sense of self. (Neisser 1988, 39).

The newborn infant is carried and held close to the mother and, therefore, the mother is on occasion incorporated into the newborn's ecological sense of self. In addition, the mother's face is the most salient object in the infant's view shortly after birth. Newborns are only able to focus on objects that are around eight inches away, which happens to the distance of the mother's face whilst breastfeeding (Stern 1979). But, at the same time, the mother is also the visual array from which the ecological sense of self surges up. For example, the infant gazes at the mother and turns her head, thus revealing her point of view. Therefore, the blurring of bodily boundaries is ambiguous—the Other is both part of me and that which I relegate to the background.

The mother first experiences the ambiguous self/other distinction in pregnancy. The foetus, carried within the mother's body, is experienced as both self and other. According to Iris Marion Young, this ambiguity in pregnancy is experienced as a split in the woman's subjectivity (1984). Young argues that when the foetus first begins to move inside the womb, it feels as if it could be a normal movement of the woman's insides. But, as pregnancy progresses, the movement feels more like the movement of another. The movement therefore appears as ambiguous—it could be interpreted as either self or other.

Furthermore, the mother has privileged access to the foetus's movements. Only she is aware of where the foetus is and can communicate this to other people. Usually, we only have privileged access to our own consciousness and our lived body, and never to the lived body of another person. Yet, although the mother has a privileged relation to the foetus, she cannot directly access its conscious thoughts. In this sense, the foetus's otherness is irreducible.

Touch

Touch is a special mode of perception because it reveals us to ourselves as both subject and object. When one touches oneself, one both touches (as a subject) and is touched (as an object). Similarly, when one touches the Other, one is touching the Other at the same time as being touched by the Other. Touching therefore reveals our ambiguity to us and it plays an important role in the ambiguous union. Through touch, mother and infant both reveal each other's bodies in new ways.

The infant gives the mother a new understanding of her body. Tanja Staehler notes that, in pregnancy, it is possible for the Other to touch me from the inside (2018).[30] Usually, I can never experience myself on the inside, apart from through the mediation of machines like an x-ray. Even through the x-ray machine, the image it creates does not appear to be part of me. I cannot recognise the particular rib cage as mine, for example. Staehler states that this is a peculiar feature of humans *being* a body rather than *having* a body. I am my body and it is always part of my experiences, but it is less accessible to me than other objects. I cannot get a good look at my body without the use of a mirror. In pregnancy, however, the Other reveals new dimensions of myself to me. The foetus reveals my insides—and thus my material existence—to me. This new sense of my body is ambiguous insofar as it is experienced as a dimension of myself, but unveiled by the Other.

The mother gives the infant her body in a new way because it is through the mother's touch that the infant acquires her first sense of her own body. According to Sartre in *The Family Idiot*, it is through the mother's love that

[30] Staehler points out that it is also possible to be touched from the inside during sex (2018).

> the child is made manifest to himself. That is, he does not discover himself only through his own self exploration and through his "double-sensations", but he learns his flesh through the pressures, the foreign contacts, the grazings, the bruisings that jostle him, or through a skilful gentleness. He will know his bodily parts, violent, gentle, beaten, constrained, or free through the violence or gentleness of the hands that awaken them. Through his flesh he also knows another flesh, but a bit later. To begin with, he internalises the maternal rhythms and labours as qualities lived with his own body. (FI, 1, 47)

The infant does not discover her body through proprioception or exploration. It is the touch of the mother that reveals to the infant her bodily being and her physically separate self. If those touches are rough, they will be internalised into her own sense of her body, and eventually her character or constitution. The child 'internalizes the maternal activity as the passivity which conditions all the drives and inner appetite-rhythms… briefly, his own mother, absorbed into his body's innermost depths, becomes the pathic structure of his affective nature.' (FI, 1, 47-8).

Sartre also emphasises the importance of maternal touch in *Saint Genet*. Jean Genet is raised in an institution and then by foster parents who think that he is a thief. Therefore he never has the opportunity to internalise the loving touch of his mother as his own body. The result of this is that he never feels comfortable in his own body:

> For want of having known the primordial relationship with naked flesh, with the swooning fertility of a woman, [Genet] will never have that tender familiarity with his own flesh, that abandon which makes it possible for others to reproduce within themselves and by themselves the indissoluble intimacy of mother and nursling. (SG, 7).

The infant's sense of her own body is therefore ambiguously self and other. It is the internalisation of the Other's touch, but it is also the infant's awareness of her own body.

The mother's touch does not aim at the infant as a physical object, but as an embodied consciousness. According to Sartre, the body is not only a physical object but also the facticity of consciousness, its way of being-in-the-world. A touch that solicits subjectivity through the body is a 'caress'. In *Being and Nothingness*, the caress is used in sexual desire to draw subjectivity into the flesh. However, between the mother and child, the mother's touch aims at the infant as a valuable centre of meaning, as in maternal love, suggesting that she is cherishing the infant as a consciousness (Barnes 1981).

Conflict

So far, I have painted an idyllic picture of the mother-child relationship. However, at the same time as there is joyful union, there also exists conflict. But this is not the conflict of Look that arises in our bad faith pursuit of the God-project. Rather, this kind of conflict is natural and beneficial to both mother and child. Conflict is not a feature of the ambiguous union that makes it ambiguous; it is a consequence of relationship's ambiguous distinction between self and other.

Since the ambiguous union must keep in tension both the irreducible difference of the Other and the same-ness that allows for an immediate perception of the Other's intentions, shared emotions, and blurred bodily boundaries, it follows that the two opposed modes of existence sometimes conflict. But, unlike the interpersonal conflict of the God-project, conflict in the ambiguous union is 'positive' (Mirvish 1996). Conflict between parent and child is both necessary and healthy. Challenging each other will allow both child—and parent—to grow. The parent's aim is to develop the child as an independent freedom but, in order for the child

to eventually become a free adult, the parent will have to sometimes override the child's wishes. For example, the parent prevents the child from running out onto a busy road. The conflict is positive because it only limits the child's freedom now in order to bring about the child's freedom as an adult.

The parent benefits from this kind of conflict because the child's constant challenges to the parent can help prevent the parent from inventing a fixed view of herself, as occurs in the impure reflection of bad faith. For example, the child's questioning of why the parent has to go to work each morning can reveal to the parent his or her own radical freedom.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that there is a basic sense of self that is present from birth, which is then transformed into a richer sense of self through the child's relationship with the mother. Before the richer sense of self is acquired, mother and infant exist in an ambiguous union. The Look which first reveals the Other as a subject to the infant is non-threatening because it is a loving, comprehending, and mirroring Look. In the next chapter, I shall argue that it is within the ambiguous union that authentic love is possible.

Chapter 4. Authentic Love Between Mother and Child

Having presented my account of the early mother-child relationship, I will now argue that the love between mother and child is authentic. In the previous chapter, I proposed that there exists a basic sense of self that is present from birth. The infant then develops further senses of self through her ongoing relationship with the mother. Before these more sophisticated senses of self are acquired, the mother and infant exist in an ambiguous union. It is here, I shall argue, that authentic love is possible.

To recall from Chapter 1, the problem that this thesis aims to solve is as follows: Sartre gives a convincing account that romantic love is in bad faith. But we can also recognise elements of his account of authentic love in our own relationships. If bad faith is widespread throughout society, how can authentic love be possible? I aim to show that authentic love is practically possible even within a society afflicted by bad faith. Authentic love is possible because bad faith is not innate—rather, we are socialised into it. Prior to socialisation, the infant is capable of loving authentically. Adults are capable of returning to the authentic love of infancy through Sartre's mechanism of the 'spiral' (PM, 106), which shall be explained in the next chapter.

These arguments as to how authentic love is possible will be presented in Chapter 5. My main focus in Chapter 4 is to describe the love between mother and infant, in order to show that it is authentic. The first part of this chapter will show how mother-child love meets Sartre's definition of authentic love. I argue that mother-child love follows an alternative

fundamental project to the bad-faith of the God-project: the project of disclosure. In the second part, I will show how mother-child love avoids the problems that are the downfall bad faith love in *Being and Nothingness*. Finally, I will consider whether living under patriarchy makes authentic mother-child love impossible, and whether my account is susceptible to the same objections that I raised regarding the communication argument in Chapter 2.

The Authenticity of Mother-Child Love

In this section, I will show that mother-child love meets Sartre's definition of authentic love in the *Notebooks*. I will begin by revisiting Sartre's account of authentic love, before then demonstrating how mother-child love meets this definition. Both mother and child pursue the project of disclosure as their fundamental project, rather than the God-project. Their relationship shares in the features of authentic love as conceived by Sartre. In particular, mother-child love is a generous gift.

Sartre's Definition of Authentic Love

To recall from Chapter 1, love is in bad faith and doomed to failure because it is a concrete manifestation of the God-project. The aim of the God-project is to make it continually seem as if one has a fixed nature. Love is an attempt to possess the Other's power to objectify me, in order to guarantee that I will be granted a positive fixed nature. However, this attempt is inevitably unsuccessful because it is impossible to possess a person's free subjectivity whilst maintaining it as free—one ultimately ends up objectifying it. Furthermore, I can never have

a fixed nature because I am a free for-itself. Love is therefore in bad faith because it is an attempt to flee the human condition.

Sartre later sketches out an account of authentic love in the *Notebooks*, although the work was never finished. As I explained in Chapter 1, mutual comprehension is a necessary condition for all authentic relations with others. In comprehension, I apprehend the Other's free subjectivity through their objecthood. Although I immediately perceive the Other as a material body, at the same time I comprehend him as a free subject with a project. Therefore, in comprehension, I grasp the Other as an ambiguous being (NE, 285). This is in contrast with *Being and Nothingness*, where Sartre says that it is impossible to apprehend the Other as both subject and object at once. 'The fact is that we could take up a consistent attitude towards the Other only if she were revealed to us *at the same time* as subject and as object… which is by definition impossible.' (BN, 537-8).

It is true that it is impossible to be in direct contact with the Other's subjectivity (Webber 2009, 126-7). A subject is one for whom the world's contents are objects. If I make it my object, it loses its character as intentionality. Comprehension, however, depends on a prior awareness of the Other as a subject acquired in the Look. I recognise the Other as a conscious free subject in comprehension because I have already experienced the Other as a subject in the Look. In comprehension, the Other is the object of my Look, but she is not just a material object in the midst of the world; rather, she appears as a new centre of the world, a new organisation of its contents (BN, 352). In this way, I recognise the Other's freedom, without having to be the object of a Look (NE, 279).

Authentic love relations are distinguished from authentic relations with the Other in general insofar as I value the Other's body and bestow value upon her as a particular being. I do not simply value the Other because she is funnier than others; I value her wit in particular. I adopt a project of protecting the Other's material being because it is the necessary condition of their freedom and I value her freedom. This includes seeking to protect even the basest parts of her bodily being (Jeanson 1974, 232).

To value the Other's material being is generous, according to Sartre. I give the Other's contingent material existence a meaning as that which I love and value (NE, 506-7). It is also generous to reveal the Other's qualities, which the Other can only acquire through the Look (NE, 507). But, at the same time as revealing the Other's qualities, I generously choose not to reduce her to a mere object, but instead to recognise her freedom (NE, 281).

In authentic love, comprehension and the bestowal of value are reciprocal. We both reveal each other as ambiguous beings (NE, 285). In addition, we reciprocate the gifts of meaning and value .

The Love Between Mother and Child is Authentic

In this section, I will show that the love between mother and child accords with Sartre's account of authentic love in the *Notebooks*. I will begin by arguing that both mother and child are not following the God-project in their relationship, but rather the project of disclosure. Then I will demonstrate that mother-child love shares in the features of authentic love as described by Sartre, including generosity and reciprocity. My argument here only

applies to the mother-child relationship in the ambiguous union, before the infant has acquired a richer sense of self.

The Project of Disclosure

The project of disclosure is an alternative fundamental project to the bad faith of the God-project. Instead of seeking a fixed nature, I aim to unveil being. The project of disclosure is the fundamental project that is pursued in authentic love. Authentic relations with others require that one abandons the God-project because otherwise one will be unable to engage in mutual comprehension. In bad faith, the Look gives rise to conflict because it reveals to me that the Other is free, and therefore that I am free. Freedom in the God-project is an anti-value because I am trying to make it seem as if I have a fixed nature. Therefore, whilst I am following the God-project, I do not want to comprehend the Other as a freedom or be comprehended by the Other as a freedom. I would react to such a look by objectifying the Other. Thus I need to abandon the God-project if I am to engage in mutual comprehension with the Other.

I will now describe the project of disclosure in further detail, drawing from the accounts of both Sartre and Beauvoir to elucidate it.

Sartre and the Project of Disclosure

In Chapter 1, I suggested that authentic love abandons the project of appropriating the Other's freedom in favour of unveiling and creating (NE, 507). To unveil the Other's being is an 'original structure of authentic love' (NE, 508). The project of disclosure also features

in the communication argument, as discussed in Chapter 2. In *What is Literature?*, Sartre argues that both reader and writer pursue a project of disclosure: the writer discloses the world to the reader to show how it might be changed, and the reader discloses the writer's message within the text (WL, 31, 45). What both accounts hold in common is that to disclose being is to unveil it rather than to appropriate it, and that the activity of disclosure is creative.

In the *Notebooks*, Sartre describes the God-project that disclosure replaces as a project of 'appropriation or identification' (NE, 482). In *Being and Nothingness*, he also refers to an 'original…project of appropriation' (BN, 785). The God-project is a project of appropriation because it is a desire to appropriate being-in-itself. Recall that being-for-itself is always separated from itself. The desire of the God-project is to appropriate Being, so that the for-itself might coincide with itself. One way to appropriate something is to identify with it. If I identify with something, I make it part of me, such that I can never be separated from it. Bad faith love is a project of appropriation; the lover desires to appropriate the beloved's freedom.

To recall from Chapter 2, Sartre believes that authenticity will be brought about by a radical conversion in the *Notebook*s. The conversion will consist in abandoning the 'the project to-be-for-itself-in-itself' and replacing it with 'a project of unveiling and creation.' (NE, 482). 'Conversion consists in renouncing the category of *appropriation*' (NE, 479). Earlier, I argued that the radical conversion is impossible. But I agree with Sartre that the God-project must be abandoned in authentic love and replaced with the project of disclosure. This is in contrast to Anderson's view, which is that the God-project will be replaced with valuing freedom as one's ultimate end (1993, 53). In my view, it is not freedom that becomes one's ultimate end, but unveiling and creating.

The project of disclosure is a project to be authentic. I defined authenticity in Chapter 1 as that which accepts the human condition instead of attempting to flee from it. One must be accurately aware of one's situation and accept one's radical responsibility (ASJ, 90). This is the case in the project of disclosure. One accepts one's contingency and one's historical and geographical situation. One embraces one's freedom as necessary for unveiling Being.

In the project of disclosure, I unveil being without pretending that I am its origin. The world and its objects do not exist for me; they simply *exist*. 'In unveiling, on the contrary, Being and the For-itself are already given and Being as a whole is given to the For-itself as *world*….' (NE, 483). However, I do not cease creating meaning in the world. I continue to give the world meaning through my projects, but I recognise that this meaning is only meaning *for me* (NE, 485). The meaning I create is not objective but, at the same time, this is the only meaning that things in the world could ever have.

I no longer pretend to be God in order to flee my radical freedom; instead, 'I consent to be a man' (NE, 482). I accept my contingency and therefore justify it, since only a human being is capable of justifying anything. 'Therefore we arrive at the type of intuition that will unveil authentic existence: an absolute contingency that has only itself to justify itself by assuming itself' (NE, 482).

The project of disclosure requires that one accept one's gratuity and contingency (NE, 491). One overcomes the temptation to appropriate being and put oneself at the centre of the universe. 'Thus the authentic man perpetually surpasses the temptation…*to be* everything.' (NE, 493). Instead of experiencing joy in one's existence being justified, as Sartre says we

do in bad faith love (BN, 491), one experiences joy in 'unveiling *what is*' (NE, 496). It is generous to freely choose to unveil being and create meaning in the world (NE, 499).

In the God-project, the aim of romantic love was to possess the Other's freedom. In authentic love, I desire to disclose the Other as Other. '[I]n authenticity I choose to unveil the Other.' (NE, 500). I disclose the Other's facticity by giving him an outside and conferring upon him qualities. I unveil the Other's fragility, by making him aware of himself as a vulnerable body. He is fragile for me because I reveal him as something material in the midst of the world that could potentially be hurt. These dimensions of the Other could not exist without me. I comprehend the Other's freedom through his objecthood, but I do not try and appropriate his freedom. I bestow meaning upon the Other, in addition to the subjective meaning that he gives himself (NE, 500).

Sartre says that authentic love is to disclose the Other's vulnerability and fragility and will that the Other's freedom surpasses it (NE, 501). My Look reveals the Other as a contingent being in the world. I make this object-being a condition of his being able to freely choose his goals, and I will that he surpasses it. This means that I have to be prepared to offer help if he appeals to me to aid him with his projects. This project of unveiling the Other as a being in the world is, according to Sartre, 'to love him in his body.' (NE, 501). I rejoice in the Other's freedom without appropriating it. It is my project to protect it. I only 'surpass it'—treat it as a means—if this will help to achieve the Other's ends (NE, 507-8).

Beauvoir and the Project of Disclosure

Simone de Beauvoir also explores the project of disclosure in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. As Beauvoir published *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in 1947, and Sartre wrote the *Notebooks* between 1947 to 1948 (NE, vii), it is highly likely that the two colleagues and lovers discussed their ideas together and influenced each other. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to use Beauvoir's text to understand their common conception of the project of disclosure.

Beauvoir first mentions the project of disclosure near the beginning of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. According to Beauvoir, there is 'an original type of attachment to being', which is not 'wanting to be', but rather 'wanting to disclose being' (EA, 12). That the project is 'original' and contrasted with 'wanting to be' suggests that Beauvoir regards the project of disclosure to be as fundamental as the God-project.

Beauvoir illustrates the project of disclosure with the example of sliding over a snow field (EA, 12).[31] Instead of trying to possess the snow field, one delights in the snow field's evasion of my attempts to appropriate it. 'It remains foreign, forbidden…' I slide over the snow without sinking into it; I marvel at its vast, blank, featureless expanse. In the project of disclosure, the failure of appropriation is a triumph, not a defeat. This appropriation is what Beauvoir calls the 'vain attempt to *be* God'. Its failure makes one 'exist *as* man' (EA, 12-13).

Beauvoir suggests that the God-project and the project of disclosure are fundamental because they are two moments of intentionality in the upsurge of consciousness; that is to say, two ways in which consciousness relates to being-in-itself (Bergoffen 1997). The first moment is the disclosure of Being by consciousness as utterly contingent and unknowable;

[31] C.f. Sartre's discussion of skiing in *Being and Nothingness* (754 ff.)

this is the project of disclosure. Hence when Beauvoir describes the project as making oneself a lack of being in order that there might be being, she adds that the 'term *in order that* clearly indicates intentionality' (EA, 12). The second moment of intentionality is consciousness's appropriation of the world through creating meanings, values and projects; this is the fundamental project of appropriation, or the God-project (EA, 23-24). Therefore, Beauvoir's project of disclosure is more passive than Sartre's. Sartre thinks that in disclosure one gives meaning to Being, whereas Beauvoir suggests that one must be Being's passive witness. However, in the project of disclosure, one still asserts oneself as a freedom. But, instead of being a freedom that appropriates the world, one is a freedom that reveals the world.

In love, the God-project ought to be rejected in favour of the project of disclosure. Beauvoir describes a type of person in bad faith, the passionate man, who 'seeks possession; he seeks to attain being.' (EA, 64). His project fails because the object of his passion will never completely belong to him. Insofar as he has not merged with the object, it continues to transcend him. He must accept his distance from the object and see this distance as the condition upon which the object is disclosed. He will then rejoice in this distance (EA, 66). This amounts to rejecting the project of appropriation for the project of disclosure.

Beauvoir then equates the passionate man with the lover in bad faith. In authentic love, one must love the Other in their otherness and irreducible freedom.

> It is only as something strange, forbidden, as something free, that the other is revealed as an other. And to love him genuinely is to love him in his otherness and in that freedom by which he escapes. Love is renunciation of all possession, of all confusion. One renounces being in order that there may be that being which one is not. (EA, 67)

The Other is truly Other only if they are permitted to remain free and different from me. Thus to genuinely love someone is to respect their freedom. Love must reject possession, as possession is an attempt to assimilate the Other to the Same. If I possess something, it becomes part of me, something that is my property. The love must renounce the project of appropriation and, in generosity, disclose a being which he is not.

Disclosure and the Conversion

In summary, the project of disclosure is a project to unveil being, rather than to appropriate it. The God-project is abandoned and replaced by the project of disclosure in authentic love. Both Sartre and Beauvoir hold that this amounts to a radical conversion (NE, 482; EA, 13). However, in one passage in the *Notebooks*, Sartre suggests that a radical conversion is unnecessary for adopting a project of disclosure:

> In the Hell of passions (described in B & N), this revelation of the other is conceived of as a pure surpassing…. I surpass his ends with my own, therefore they are nothing other than givens, I transform his freedom into a given quality, I can do violence to him.
>
> We shall see below how all this may be transformed through conversion. But what I want to note here is that within this hell there is already generosity and creation. For in springing up within the world I give the other For-itselves a new dimension of being. (NE, 499)

In the text that follows, Sartre states that the conflict of the Look will not arise if I adopt a project of unveiling the Other; 'in authenticity I choose to unveil the Other.' (NE, 500). These quotes therefore seem to suggest that adopting the project of disclosure is possible without a conversion.

In Chapter 2, I argued that the radical conversion is impossible. However, for the sake of argument, let us suppose some less radical form of the conversion is possible. Authentic love between mother and child would still not require a conversion, for two reasons. Firstly, as I shall show in Chapter 5, the baby is not born following the God-project but is rather socialised into bad faith. By demonstrating that the God-project is in bad faith in Chapter 1 (22-25), I have shown that the God-project is contingent. One can continue to be a human being without following the God-project. Therefore, it is possible that the infant to be born without following the God-project. If I can show that the infant is socialised into bad faith at some later point in childhood, then she does not need to undergo a conversion in order to adopt the project of disclosure because she does not come into the world following the God-project.

I am not arguing that the infant is born consciously choosing to follow the project of disclosure. Rather, the project of disclosure accurately explains her behaviour towards the mother, and therefore it could be said to be her fundamental project. Remember that, for Sartre, to pursue a project does not require that one rationally deliberates over whether to adopt it (Webber 2009, 28).

Secondly, the mother does not have to undergo a conversion in order to pursue the project of disclosure because she accesses the time when she herself was an infant when she interacts with her own child. I will state this argument more fully in the next chapter. For now, I will instead focus on the phenomena of the ambiguous union. A phenomenological description of their relationship will reveal that the mother is in fact following the project of disclosure, seeking to unveil and create the infant instead of appropriating her. The ambiguity of their relationship provides a further reason why the God-project is not pursued.

The infant is only ambiguously other, so the infant cannot give the mother the fixed nature that she seeks in the God-project. She is not experienced as the transcendent Other who can give me a nature that feels sufficiently 'fixed'.

Evidence that Mother and Child are Following the Project of Disclosure

I will now give a phenomenological description of mother-child love, in order to show that it is not pursuing the God-project but is instead pursuing a project of disclosure. This is a description of love in the ambiguous union, the period that begins from possibly late pregnancy, and certainly early infancy, and ends once the infant has acquired a richer sense of self. I shall first consider the infant's experience, followed by the mother's experience.

The project of disclosure captures our experience of maternal love more accurately than the God-project. In *Being and Nothingness*, the lover tries to become his beloved's absolute centre of value, as then he will be able to guarantee a positive evaluation. On this view, the project of love seems only to involve the Other incidentally—at its heart, it is a selfish project to be worshipped. But the love between mother and child is essentially about reaching out towards the Other. For both mother and child, that particular Other is unique and irreplaceable. The mother loves the child not for her own selfish satisfaction, but with the aim of the child growing up and becoming independent. Her goal recognises the infant as Other and does not try to appropriate her being. In the God-project, joy comes from feeling as if one's own existence is justified. Whereas, in mother-child love, joy comes from delighting in the other person's existence, in your close relationship together and, for the mother, in watching the child grow. This fits with Sartre's statements about joy in the *Notebooks*—that joy lies in 'unveiling *what is*' (NE, 496).

In Sartre's view, the project of disclosure aims to confer additional meaning onto the Other. This is the case for both mother and child. Their lives are enriched by the presence of the Other. In the mother's case, she might find it difficult to think back to her life before her child, as being a mother has become part of her identity (Rogers 2013, 120). The potential for love to change one's conception of oneself and how the world appears is emphasised by Merleau-Ponty: 'for I now discover that I can no longer conceive of my life without this love.' (PP, 442). According to Merleau-Ponty, love is an atmosphere that changes my relation to everything in the world and colours how I live my life within it (PP, 443).

In the *Notebooks* and *What is Literature?*, the project of disclosure is creative. Sartre claims that love creates the Other as a contingent being-in-the-world and creates a meaning for his actions (NE, 500). Mother-child love is also creative, which suggests that it follows the project of disclosure. The mother exercises her creativity in a number of different ways. Most importantly for authentic love, the mother creates the infant as Other. I shall argue later that this constitutes a generous gift. The mother's ability to create the Other explains why the infant is initially ambiguously self and Other. Although mother and child do not form a joint subject, the infant is the Other in that the mother has created from her flesh. She then devotes her freedom to helping the infant develop into a full Other that is no longer dependent on her.

It could be argued that the mother does not strictly 'create' the infant as Other, for the processes of pregnancy and birth are passive and not creative. This view has been attributed to Beauvoir and I will discuss it towards the end of the chapter. However, I do not think that this view is correct. The mother demonstrates a special kind of 'passive creativity',

according to Florentien Verhage (2013). Her idea of passive creativity is taken from Merleau-Ponty's description of painterly perception in *Eye and Mind*. The painter needs to allow himself to be pierced by the world (2013, 306). He must abandon his preconceptions and stop forcing the world into his categories. Then he can open himself up to how the world initially strikes him. An example of this is painting with perspective. In order to paint with perspective, the painter must attend to the initial appearance of the world, the shapes and colours as they appear to him. For example, he knows that parallel lines never touch but, in order to depict a railway stretching away from the viewer, he draws the lines touching at the horizon. Insofar as he is receptive to the initial appearance of the world, the painter is passive. The artist is no longer the centre of creativity. Rather, the interplay between artist and world is itself creative.

The mother exhibits similar passivity. She does not attempt to appropriate the child; rather, she wishes to give the child a new and separate existence from herself. According to Verhage (2013), the mother brings the child into the world through birth and then she witnesses the child, disclosing the child as a free subject. Like the painter, she exhibits passive creativity. We can see this in the mother's role of bringing about the richer senses of self. Through interacting with the mother, the child acquires these senses of self. But the mother does not actively set out to inculcate them in the child.

The mother's love also creates the infant as valuable. Through caring for the child, she makes the child into something that ought to be cared for. Her love bestows value—she makes it the case that something is valuable. It is her choice to love that makes the infant valuable, not the infant's performance judged relative to some independent standard (Singer 2009; Frie 1997).

Sartre himself seems to agree that there is a creative element to motherhood. In *Words*, Sartre describes feeling fused in a group of schoolboys playing games. Here, the mothers perform the task of bringing the children out of the animal and making them into individuals. The boys forget themselves in their games, until they remember their parents. The memory of their parents is the only thing that individuates the boys—that this particular boy is the son of those particular parents. According to Sartre, their parents gave them the idea that the world was created for them and the children, in return, adored them. As long as they believed this, they could not dissolve namelessly into one single community:

> According to our mothers, our games 'over-excited' us and sometimes transformed our groups into a small, integral crowd which absorbed me; but we could never forget for long our parents whose invisible presence soon forced us back into the collective loneliness of animal communities. Without aim, end, or hierarchy, our society wavered between complete fusion and juxtaposition. (W, 139)
>
> [The boys were] united and separated by the tacit conviction that the world had been created for our use and that our respective parents were the best in the world (W, 139)

However, although I have argued that motherhood is creative, Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* suggests that the desire to be a creator is in bad faith (BN, 25-26) Isabelle Mercier (2001) applies this claim to the mother-child relationship. Mercier argues that the mother's conception of herself as the creator of the foetus is a desire to possess the foetus. To possess the foetus is attempt to identify with it. But the mother cannot claim that the foetus is her creation unless it is separate from her. Thus she can only possess the foetus when she gives up her claim to have created it. Mercier claims that tension this is especially clear at birth, when the infant is seen by the mother as an Other in the world.

However, this is not the right way to conceive of the mother's creative role in bringing about a separate conscious being with a sense of self. The mother is more like the reader in *What is Literature*, participating in a joint act of creation with the writer. To recall from Chapter 2, Sartre holds that the reader contributes to the meaning of the text (WL, 31), but his efforts are guided by the writings of the author (WL, 4). The reader must be free in order to participate in the text's creation; thus the novel is an 'appeal' by the writer to the reader's freedom (WL, 33-4). In return, the author requires that his readers reciprocate this confidence in his own freedom (WL, 38). Similarly, the mother comes to show more and more respect for the child's freedom and to appreciate her as a person. In the mirroring games of protoconversations, the mother freely engages the infant and freely permits herself to be drawn into the game. Through soliciting each other's freedom in these early interactions, the infant comes to learn that she is separate from his mother.

For these reasons, the mother does not pursue the God-project in the early mother-child relationship, but rather follows the project of disclosure. She discloses and creates the infant as Other and she values the infant. She raises the infant so that the infant may become an independent adult. However, Sartre states in the *Notebooks* that authentic love is reciprocal (NE, 414), but I have yet to show that the infant is following the project of disclosure. This is what I shall focus on for the rest of the section.

I pointed out in Chapter 3 that Sartre makes it sound as if the baby is pursuing the God-project in *The Family Idiot* (Ch. 3, 134). The infant experiences herself as an absolute centre of meaning and value, making demands on her parents, who are completely devoted to her. Sartre argues that it is through this experience that one acquires a mandate to live. One will not be able to become an authentic individual as an adult without this early experience. So

it seems like Sartre is arguing that it is necessary to follow the God-project as a child in order to be authentic as an adult.

Regardless of whether or not this is a correct interpretation of *The Family Idiot*, I do not agree that the infant pursues the God-project. In the God-project, one tries to identify with a fixed nature in order to flee one's freedom. One requires the Other's Look for this project, for only the Other can give us a fixed nature that is sufficient fixed. However, in the previous chapter, I described the Look between mother and child as a mirroring Look. We can observe this mirroring Look in protoconversations. It shows us that the infant is not simply trying to be the object of a Look. Rather, she wants to respond to a Look, and furthermore she appeals to the mother as subject to respond to her in return.

The fixed nature that we are seeking the God-project is the ego, treated as a fixed nature. But the infant does not possess an awareness of the ego from birth. Thus she cannot be following the God-project. The infant also lacks the cognitive ability to give an objectifying Look, although this does not mean that adults do not experience her Look as objectifying. The infant is not yet able to assign predicates to people, nor does she grasp any social roles or identities. Realising that the infant is not capable of such a Look, the mother should not feel objectified by the infant. We observe that this is the case in how uninhibited mothers are around their young infants. They do not behave around their small children as they would around other adults. Therefore, it appears that the mother does not experience the same alienation that she does from adults when the infant looks at her; if she does feel alienated, this is because she has mistakenly attributed cognitive skills to the infant that the infant does not have.

Sartre's description, therefore, seems more appropriate for the experience of older children—children who have developed the ability to self-reflect, a theory of mind, and a conceptual sense of self. However, I do not think that his description applies to all children. In a healthy mother-child relationship, parents set boundaries for their children and mothers have their own interests outside of their children. The child that Sartre describes sounds spoilt. Whilst I agree with Sartre that children need to experience the absolute security of their parents' love, this is possible without the child being made to feel that she is the centre of the universe.

For these reasons, I hold that both the mother and the infant are following the project of disclosure in their early loving relationship. In the next section, I will demonstrate that the mother-child relationship possesses the other features of authentic love that Sartre identifies in the *Notebooks*.

The Features of Authentic Love

This section will demonstrate that the mother-child relationship in the ambiguous union shares in the features of authentic love identified by Sartre in the *Notebooks*. First of all, I revisit my arguments that mother and child experience each other as ambiguous. Secondly, I argue that the Look between mother and child is non-conflictual. Thirdly, I show that the relationship is generous and a gift for both mother and child. Finally, I demonstrate that the love between them is reciprocal.

To recall from the *Notebooks*, Sartre says that an authentic relation to the Other must grasp the Other as an ambiguous being (NE, 285). This will allow us to escape the vicious circle

of objectification (BN, 537-8). In the ambiguous union, which is the period before the infant acquires a richer sense of self, mother and child grasp each other as ambiguously subject and object. The key constitutive features of the ambiguous union are dialogue, shared emotions, blurred bodily boundaries, and touch. I will briefly describe below how these are relevant to authentic love.

In Chapter 4, I explained how mother and child experience shared emotions; emotions that are separately owned but jointly constructed through emotional entrainment. This entrainment most often occurs in early dialogue—that is to say, in protoconversations. In protoconversations, both mother and child are aware of each other as subjects in addressing their vocalisations towards each other. Neither perceives the Other as subject directly, but they can comprehend the Other as subject through the Other's vocalisations and gestures. Thus protoconversations are a case of mutual comprehension.

I explained in the previous chapter how mother and child experience bodily boundaries as blurred, as well as experiencing the body itself as ambiguously subject and object. In accordance with authentic love, mother and infant also disclose each other's bodily being as valuable. They share an intimate bodily relationship—the mother tends to all of the baby's bodily needs, as well as feeding the baby with her own body. She discloses the baby's vulnerability and fragility as valuable by seeking to protect it.

The mother gives meaning to the infant's bodily being through her touch. As discussed in Chapter 3, the mother's touch is the origin of the infant's sense of her own body. The mother's touch therefore enables the infant to give her own meaning to her body. To give the Other meaning is part of the project of authentic love. Touch is a sense that puts perceiver

and perceived into contact, as compared to vision which operates at a distance. The loving touch thereby breaks down the strict distinction between self and other, replacing it instead with the 'between' (Oliver 2001). This is especially the case in the mother-child relationship, since the infant internalises the mother's touch. Touch discloses oneself and the Other as ambiguous beings.

A special Look takes place between mother and infant, which is the product of their ambiguous union. This Look is not the hostile and alienating Look of bad faith. This is for three reasons: the Look makes the infant into a loved object, the Look is a comprehension of the child's subjectivity, and the Look is a mirroring Look. Because the Look is not alienating, neither mother nor child are prompted to flee from it by objectifying the Other. The infant's original awareness of the Other as subject is through becoming aware of herself as a loved object for the mother. After this, infant and mother are able to engage in mutual comprehension. Mutual comprehension is possible because neither mother nor infant is following the God-project, and so neither is trying to flee the freedom of the Other. [32]

I will now show that mother-child love is both generous and a gift. This is a key feature of love in the *Notebooks*. Sartre describes the help I give to the Other to help him to achieve his projects as a 'gift' in the *Notebooks* (NE, 281). This gift consists of my choice to move beyond conflict in my relations with Others, and the offer of my freedom and body to help the Other to achieve his end. The gift is gratuitous—I give my help without reason or justification (NE, 283). I also give the Other the gift of his being-for-the-Other. That is, I

[32] It might be objected here that what I have described as the 'loving Look' is what Sartre identifies as in *Being and Nothingness* as the reaction of 'pride'. On this view, the infant takes pride in being judged to be valuable and important by her mother. But pride is in bad faith because I pretend as if I myself am responsible for my objecthood, and not the Other (BN, 394). However, the loving Look is not an example of pride because the young infant does not yet possess an ego to be proud of. She experiences herself to be the object of a loving and caring consciousness, rather than as an object with a fixed nature of being lovable.

bestow meaning on his actions, and thus reveal an extra dimension of his being (NE, 499. This gift is generous, both in that it gives more than what is expected and in that it is given for the Other's sake, not mine. To give the gift is inherently risky, because there is a chance that the gift will not be recognised, or the Other will appropriate it as a means to his ends (NE, 282).

Lisa Guenther, in her book *The Gift of the Other* (2006), conceives of both pregnancy and birth as gifts given by the mother to the child. Whilst Guenther believes that this has ethical implications, I shall only consider how pregnancy and birth as the gift meet the definition of authentic love.

One of Guenther's main points is that each person's existence was made possible only through a gift by the Other. Although birth is the start of my existence, it requires the action of the Other. This means that my existence is never fully my own. This applies equally to all human beings, which Sartre himself recognises in *Hope Now*. He describes an ethical fraternal relation between all humans that is possible only because each human being has to be born, and to be born is to be born of a mother. 'For every person, birth is the same phenomenon as it is for his neighbour to such a degree that, in a certain way, two men talking to each other have the same mother…. To belong to the same species is, in a way, to have the same parents. In that sense, we are brothers.' (HN, 87).

A key feature of the gift is the notion that it is given without expectation of receiving anything in return. This is exemplified in pregnancy. The mother creates and carries something from and within her body, which will never belong to her and will eventually grow away from her.

In pregnancy, the mother gives the gift of space to the foetus. By giving the infant space, the mother shows hospitality to the infant, according to Guenther. The mother welcomes the Other with her body—she allows the foetus to occupy its inner space. She devotes a great deal of time and energy to growing the Other inside her body. As the foetus develops, it begins to exercise more control over the space it occupies in the mother's body, kicking the mother and moving around. It makes its presence known as Other.

The body is not only a material object—it is also our embodied subjectivity (BN, 410). So, in pregnancy, it is like the foetus occupies a space inside the subject. According to Frances Gray (2013), the incarnate bodily being of the mother temporarily abandons itself in order to become two in one. The mother gives up the strict boundaries of the self to welcome the Other within the self. The foetus is then a stranger in the midst of familiarity. So the ambiguity of subject and object that the pregnant woman experiences, which I discussed in the previous chapter, is the mother's first-person experience of her gift.

The mother gives the infant the gift of a fully developed sense of self. This is because the infant acquires a richer sense of through her relationship with her mother. The first relation with the Other gives the infant powers of self-reflection and a sense of her own body. This is a gift because the mother is not seeking anything in return from the infant. Rather, she raises the child so that the child will become more independent from her.

In addition, the mother gives the child the gift of his whole world. The mother mediates the world to the infant (Bigwood 1991). As described by the attachment theorist John Bowlby (1971), infants form strong bonds with their primary caregivers, whom they use as a base

from which they can explore the world. If the mother is nearby, the toddler is happy to play by herself or wander a little. If she becomes unsure, she returns to her mother to feel secure again; then she can return to exploring. The mother's gift culminates in the child being independent enough to not need to seek her out for comfort anymore.

At the same time as introducing the objective world to the infant, the mother must also protect the infant from the world (Bigwood 1991). The infant is incredibly vulnerable. The parents must love the infant in its extreme fragility. The child first learns about the world of outside objects through the body of the mother. The mother is at first the comfortable 'flesh' that cushions the baby from the world (Bigwood 1991, 69). But, as the infant grows older, it is the mother who introduces the world to the baby, and it is through her that the baby communes and communicates with it.

Finally, the mother also gifts to the infant her help. The infant appeals to the mother at the moment of her birth. Before birth, the mother was only aware of the infant through the foetus's movements and ultrasound imaging. Confronted with the face of the Other at birth, the infant demands that the mother recognise her as a free subject. This is because the infant now appears as fully separate. During pregnancy, the foetus was experienced as the Other in the same, a shift in the borders of subjectivity. Now the baby confronts her as a stranger, an uncanny experience of the familiar stranger (Guenther 2006). The infant is born naked and hungry, extremely vulnerable. She appeals to those witnessing the birth to help her. It is the mother who then takes up this task of nurturing the infant.

As a gift, the mother's love can be described as generous. It is generous in the sense that it is not given in expectation of receiving anything in return, and it gives more than is expected.

As generous gift and hospitality, love values the Other and it tries to benefit the Other. The mother will commit the rest of her life to aiding the development of an independent subject. This contrasts with adult romantic love, for which it is not the case that nothing is desired in return from one's partner. In monogamous romantic love, one does not simply want the best for one's partner, as then one would be content with them finding happiness with another partner. The lover wants the best for his beloved but always on the condition that she stays with him.

The mother's gift is also generous in the sense that she bears the pain of the Other. In pregnancy, the mother's body becomes a dwelling place for a stranger. The growing foetus stretches the mother's skin, squeezes against and kicks her ribs. The mother has nowhere to go and cannot escape the pain of the Other under her skin (Guenther 2006). The foetus depends upon the mother to make room for it and the mother does; even though she has no room for the child in her body, she creates space.

Besides this physical pain, the mother also exposes herself to the emotional pain of the child growing apart from her. She raises this beloved child knowing that she nurtures the child in order for the child to become independent from her. She also knows that she may be hurt by the child—for example, in arguments, and in the child's actions.

But the nature of the gift is to be a risk (NE, 282). Alongside this risk of pain, there is also a risk of the gift not being recognised, or it being taken for granted. The gift might be forgotten or instrumentalised. At the same time, the child is vulnerable to the mother, dependent on her for her survival. Both mother and child need to trust each other. The child needs to trust that the mother will continue to care for her, and she needs to trust that the

mother will protect her as the mother gradually introduces her to the dangerous external world.

So far, I have described the ways in which the mother's love for the child is a gift, but I have not shown the child's love for the mother reciprocates this generosity. If the mother's love is not reciprocated, this would put into question whether the mother-child relationship is a case of authentic love. Sartre states that authentic love is reciprocal. 'No love without deeper recognition and reciprocal comprehension of freedoms' (NE, 414).

Initially, it appears that the infant does not reciprocate the mother's generosity. Generosity must be freely given, but the infant is helpless and has no choice but to maintain her relationship with her mother. The infant cannot move away from her, for example, as she lacks the power of independent locomotion. Kenneth Anderson (2010) picks up this point that mother-child love is not reciprocal. The mother might recognise the child's freedom, but only as what it may one day become, not as what it currently is. The child does not recognise her own or anyone else's freedom, and is therefore not fully an Other to herself or other people. The relationship is therefore one-sided—the mother helps the child to develop into a free subject, whereas the infant is helpless.

But this is not a plausible account of the mother-child relationship and, in constructing it, Anderson cites little evidence about what children are actually like. In my phenomenological account of early infancy, I have provided evidence that the child does recognise the mother's freedom, in joint attention and protoconversation. This recognition is not explicit—the infant lacks the language and concepts in order to reflectively recognise the Other's freedom. But it is an immediate, unreflective recognition of the Other as a subject, much like Sartre

describes in the Look. In contrast, the mother has an explicit recognition of the baby's free subjectivity—for example, if she describes the infant as having goals and desires. Both are reciprocally aware of each other's freedom but in different ways.

While Anderson is correct to point out that there is a power imbalance between the vulnerable infant and the nurturing mother, this does not entail that the relationship is 'one-sided'. The baby is dependent on the mother for his continued survival, whereas as the mother can survive without him. However, the mother uses her extra power to raise the child to be independent of her—to be able to survive without her. As such, it is not clear why this asymmetry should be troubling.

The infant reciprocates the mother's gift and generosity. In early communication, the infant's love is a free gift. Babies play with their mothers just for sheer joy, and this joy is a gift. Furthermore, other subjects enrich us—they open new possibilities for us and grant new meaning to our actions. The baby gives the mother a new understanding of herself, after the experience of self-splitting in pregnancy. Having carried the Other in the Same, she now has a new relation to the Other. Finally, there is the promise of the gift being returned in the future. When the parents get older, the child will reciprocate the care that they gave her as a young infant.

It might be argued in response to this account that young infants are not capable of reciprocating love. It is true that young infants are not capable of returning love on the reflective level. But the young infant does seem to bestow value on the mother in her particularity, as seen in experimental evidence that young infants distinguish and prefer their mothers to female strangers (DeCasper and Fifer 1980). Furthermore, the young infant

appears to value the mother's bodily being, insofar as she enjoys being in close bodily contact with the mother. In these respects, the infant's love meets the criteria for authentic love, and therefore I believe that we can say that the infant loves the mother.[33]

Mother-Child Love Escapes the Problems of Bad Faith Love

In the second part of this chapter, I will argue that mother-child love escapes the problems for love that Sartre identifies in *Being and Nothingness*. First, I will briefly summarise the problems for love that I outlined in Chapter 1. Second, I will show how mother-child love overcomes them.

The Problems of Bad Faith Love

In Chapter 1, I identified four problems for love described by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. These are the lover's desire for complete devotion without reciprocity, the desire for both freedom and security, the desire for both freedom and determination, and the desire to fuse with the Other whilst maintaining the Other as Other. All of these desires lead to intractable conflict as they are impossible to satisfy. In the next chapter, I will suggest that it is not the case that these conflicts completely disappear in authentic romantic love, but rather the lovers' attitudes towards these conflicts change. But we will see here that, for some of these conflicts, mother-child love is in fact capable of resolving them.

Bad faith love involves a clash between devotion and reciprocity. For the lover in bad faith, to love is to wish to be loved. The lover wants his beloved to be completely devoted to him

[33] Experiments have disproved what Bowlby believes to be the Freudian thesis that the infant's only bond to the mother is a desire for food and warmth (e.g. Harlow and Zimmerman 1959).

and to make him into a value above all others, regardless of whether he loves her in return. What he desires is an unconditional love. But it is impossible to achieve this kind of devotion because, if the beloved loves him, then she also wants to be loved by him, in which case she does not give him completely unconditional devotion. Hence this is love's first destruction: constant dissatisfaction.

Secondly, the bad faith lover wants love to be freely given. He wants to be loved by a freedom because only a free subject can give him a fixed nature. However, at the same time, the lover wants security—he wants to guarantee that his beloved will never fall out of love with him and stop giving him a positive fixed nature. This is love's second destruction: constant insecurity.

Thirdly, bad faith love faces a conflict between freedom and determination. The lover wants love to be freely given, but he does not want his meeting the beloved to have been due to chance. He rejects the possibility that his beloved could have been just as happy with another person. Lovers reject the idea that they can even be compared to other potential partners, as this makes their love relative rather than the special, unique bond that lovers believe it to be. Sartre says that this is the third destruction of love—their constant shame.

Finally, love involves an impossible desire to fuse with the Other whilst the Other retains their character as Other. Lovers want to fuse with each other because they want to live together in perfect harmony. This will increase the security of their love and thereby guarantee for them both a positive fixed nature. Fused, the lover would be able to know what the beloved thinks of him and whether she loves him. However, at the same time, the lover

wants to maintain his beloved's character as Other because only the Other can give him a fixed nature that feels appropriately fixed. Hence the lover's desire is impossible to satisfy.

Mother-Child Love and the Problems of Bad Faith Love

I shall now consider whether mother-child love also suffers from the problems that Sartre identifies in *Being and Nothingness*. I shall begin with the problem of complete devotion and reciprocity. At the heart of the problem of devotion is Sartre's claim that love is an infinite regress—to love is to wish to be loved. But this description does not apply to mother-child love. As a gift, the mother's love does not seek anything from the child in return. It is first a movement to reach out towards the Other and to bestow value, not first a desire to be valued oneself. For this reason, mother-child love is not an infinite regress. The infant does not desire the mother's devotion because she is not developed enough to have this sort of desire. She does not have a conceptual sense of self, so she does not wish for a fixed nature of being valuable and important—not at this young age.

This is one reason why love is generous. It is true that, if I love someone, then I will want the Other to love me back. But I do not expect this or demand this of the Other. If I did, I would make the Other my object, and she would no longer appear to me as a free subject. In authentic love, any love that is returned is not owed to me. The Other is never obliged to love me.

At the same time, mother-child love is the closest that one can get to unconditional love. It is not truly unconditional, as it is given on the condition that this particular infant is her child. However, the mother does not choose which particular child she gives birth to—this

is random chance. The child is first a total stranger to her but, on the basis that this infant is her child, she loves her. Sartre recognises this in *The Family Idiot:* '[The father] will love [the son] whatever his face, but not like mothers who prefer the flesh of their flesh to anything other without demanding anything.' (FI, 1, 303). It is possible, then, that the mother could love the child no matter how he behaved, and everyone would be able to understand that she still loves him, because she is his mother.

The second problem of bad faith love is the clash between the desire for freedom and for security. Mother-child love is not doomed to failure by these competing desires because it comes close to resolving their conflict.

There is a sense of permanency in the mother-child bond. As I argued earlier, it is not possible to not have a mother. A particular woman will always be my mother, in the sense of being the woman who gestated and/or gave birth to me. I will always be *her* child. And for the mother, even if for nobody else, this baby is unique and irreplaceable (Guenther 2006). This is true even if she has multiple children. She has carried each one of them in her body, which is a unique relationship to another person; one will never again live inside another person's body (Cavarero 1995, 83).

At the same time as this sense of permanence, there is also free choice in the mother-child relationship. The mother-child bond might be a permanent fact, but mothers and children choose how to respond to this. The mother chooses whether or not to gift the child her love and care. It is a free project.

So, even though the young child might experience a particular ‘separation anxiety’ when she is separated from her mother, there is a deeper existential anxiety that is missing in mother-child love. The child is not in danger of losing some part of her identity or self-concept—this woman will always be her mother and in that sense bound to her, even if she is adopted and receives a new set of parents (Rogers 2013). Whereas in the case of adult lovers, if the beloved stops loving me there is nothing to bind her to me and she becomes like a stranger. We have the memory of our relationship but that is all. With the mother and child, a special bond will still connect them.

This sense of security can help to free the mother from seeking a positive fixed nature in the mother-child relationship, once the child is older. Because their relationship is to some extent permanent, the mother can take the following attitude towards the child—you may not like this punishment, but tough; it is good for you and I love you, and what you think of me will not change that. This is part of the generosity of the mother; she gives without expecting anything in return, not even being liked. She makes this choice out of love. She continues to love her child, even when the child is protesting how much she does not like her.

The mother cannot control her child and guarantee that she will continue to love her into adulthood. But, although the mother may fear that the child will come to hate her and cease all contact, she will remain the child’s mother and is still permitted, even expected, to love her.

Thirdly, mother-child love is not doomed to failure by a clash between freedom and determination. Just as in the case of the adult lovers, there is an element of randomness in

mother-child love. Mothers do not choose their children from a range of possible children, nor does the baby choose to be born to this particular mother (Guenther 2006). But once the infant exists, mothers can claim that they were determined to love the infant. The mother claims to love her child just because she is her child, regardless of what he or she is like. This can provide the child with reassurance.

In one respect, mother-child love does not suffer from constant shame because the mother encourages the child to form relations with others. The mother's goal is to help the child grow up into an independent adult. Therefore she encourages the child to have relationships with others, including other children and other family members. Furthermore, the mother-child relationship is also in some sense unique and permanent, as described above, which helps to defend against the threat of the third person's Look.

The child may be jealous of the mother's relationships with other people. She may wish that she could prevent the mother from leaving her and would like to be her mother's sole focus. But, again, there is a permanence in their bond which provides the child reassurance.

However, living in a patriarchal society complicates matters. Both mother and child might feel ashamed when out in public amongst other people. The mother might feel ashamed of breastfeeding in public because of how women's bodies are sexualised under patriarchy. A son may be shamed for being too close to his mother and be accused of being a 'mummy's boy'. Mothers might also feel shame when their children misbehave in public. This, too, is linked to patriarchy, for any misdeeds of the child or misfortunes that befall her tend to be blamed on the mother. This can make mothers very anxious about being out in public with their toddlers.

But I do not believe that this type of shame dooms love to failure. Mother and children have already escaped the type of shame that Sartre claims to afflict love in *Being and Nothingness*, which is a version of 'pure' or original shame (BN, 308, 358). The bad faith lovers feel shame at being an object for a third person. This is not experienced in mother-child love because their relationship cannot be made relative by other people as it is genuinely unique and permanent.

So the shame that patriarchy induces is a secondary, lesser shame—a shame brought about by moral judgement. The young infant is initially incapable of feeling such shame. The mother, however, might be affected. The worry here is that patriarchal shame makes authentic mother-child love impossible. I will come back to this issue in the next section.

Finally, I will address the issue of the desire to merge whilst maintaining the Other as Other. I have already argued that the early mother-child relationship is not an ontological union. The child possesses a basic sense of self from birth, and perhaps even from late pregnancy. Therefore, intentional consciousness is always personalised; it is always aware of itself.

So it is not possible for mothers and children to merge but the question remains as to whether they desire to merge. I do not think that this is the case. Mother and child want to be in close proximity to each other, but they both also want to retain their independence. The mother wants to keep her life outside of childrearing and the child is striving to become independent. Young children want to remain near to their mothers but this is not a desire to fuse; it is a desire for a secure base from which to explore the world.

One element of the desire to merge was that lovers want to know everything about each other and what the other person thinks. It is possible that older children share this desire to know everything about their parents. This might be why they do not like family secrets being kept from them, and get upset when they discover something that was previously hidden from them. Discovering that someone you love had not told you something about their life, when they know everything about yours, somehow puts you on unequal footing with them. However, this is surely not the case for young infants who have not yet begun to learn—or even be interested in—their parents' life stories.

The mother does not crave to know what the infant thinks of them. Mothers do not want their children to think of them as bad, mean or unfair, but this does not doom love to failure. Psychological studies show that, if mothers think that their babies are good, babies will think that their mothers are good also. All else being equal, if the mother has a 'positive attribution bias' (i.e. she thinks that the baby is not acting malevolently), then the baby tends to also have a positive attribution bias (Goswami 2014).

Most importantly, in some sense the conflicting desire to be both same and other is satisfied by the ambiguous union. In the ambiguous union, the distinction between self and Other is sometimes experienced as blurred, although mother and child cannot form a joint subject. For the infant, the mother appears to be ambiguously Other because she used to live inside the mother and she spends her waking hours in close bodily contact with the mother. For the mother, the child is ambiguously Other because the child is the Other that she created.

Responses to Objections

I will now consider two potential objections to my argument, both linked to the criticisms I made in Chapter 2 of the conversion argument and the communication argument. There, I argued that authentic love seems to be impossible in our society because of the sedimentation of bad faith. The first part of this section will consider whether or not the sedimented project of patriarchy means that authentic love between mother and child is impossible.

In Chapter 2, I also rejected the communication argument on the grounds that it did not directly address the conflict that arises from our original awareness of the Other as subject. In the second part of this section, I will consider to what extent my account repeats the communication argument and whether I escape its weaknesses.

The Patriarchy Objection

Western philosophy in general has tended to devalue mothering. Cynthia Coe (2013) reports how Plato argues that maternity only produces mortal beings, whereas philosophy and the sciences create immortal ideas, and therefore the latter form of creation is higher and more noble than the former. Mothering is perceived as a thoughtless, instinctive task (Guenther 2006).

This view seems to be repeated in *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir. Here, Beauvoir describes the child as a 'parasite', draining the mother's energy throughout the exhausting work of pregnancy (SS, 551). The mother-to-be experiences her pregnant body as immanent, nauseating flesh, ensnaring her transcending subjectivity. Then, when the baby is born, many mothers experience their children as impossibly demanding. Beauvoir describes

breastfeeding as ‘exhausting servitude’ (SS, 43). According to Beauvoir, childrearing serves the reproductive demands necessary for the continuation of the species, and therefore does not give woman the opportunity to exercise her own transcendence as an independent subject. Even if the woman looks forward to pregnancy and birth, and finds dignity or power in it, she is mistaken. The process is automatic and she does not choose the baby. One cannot have an authentic experience of giving birth because it is not free (Guenther 2006). For Beauvoir, it seems, a woman’s path to freedom lies in her rejection of motherhood and her professional fulfilment and economic independence from man.

But this is an unfair reading of Beauvoir. Beauvoir is not claiming that motherhood inevitably traps women in immanence; rather, it is motherhood under patriarchy that is the problem. If we reform society, motherhood will become fulfilling (Guenther 2006). Evidence that this is Beauvoir’s view can be found in the conclusion of *The Second Sex*. Here, Beauvoir says that reforming motherhood must be part of making men and women equal: ‘motherhood would be freely chosen—that is, birth control and abortion would be allowed—and in return all mothers and their children would be given the same rights’ (SS, 760). Children must be raised by women who are regarded as equal to men. ‘The mother would enjoy the same lasting prestige as the father if she assumed equal material and moral responsibility for the couple’ (SS, 761). If women are granted the same economic and social freedoms as men, then mothers will no longer be devalued.

However, as we are currently living in a patriarchal society, the problem that patriarchy poses for mother-child love still remains. Patriarchy makes modern mothers feel powerless. They are subject to the scrutiny of various experts, such as doctors and psychologists, who tell mothers that their own judgement is mistaken and give rise to constant self-doubt. The

mother is blamed if anything goes wrong with the child, despite the child's happiness being partly dependent upon external factors outside of her control. This explains why some mothers come to fear the Look of the third person, as I described in the section above.

Mothers are not always recognised as free human beings by the experts who scrutinise them, a point I alluded to in Chapter 3 (129-30). The pregnant body is sometimes viewed as a mere container for the foetus, rather than acknowledging the mother as a free agent in her own right (Verhage 2013). Part of the motivation for this way of thinking is that the baby's life is often valued more highly than the mother's. The baby's welfare can be employed as an excuse to perform procedures on pregnant women that mothers do not consent to, such as internal exams or caesarean sections that are not strictly necessary. Hence the coining of the term 'obstetric violence' to refer to the mistreatment of women in pregnancy and labour.[34] Such treatment is justified on the view that all that matters is a healthy baby, but some mothers are left facing the repercussions of post-traumatic stress after birth (Tucker 2018).

Patriarchy can lead mothers to behave in bad faith towards their children, according to Beauvoir. Whilst she recognises that maternal devotion 'can be experienced in perfect authenticity', however 'this is rarely the case.' (SS, 556). Beauvoir describes pregnant women under patriarchy as both indulgent (SS, 542) and narcissistically obsessed with their own bodies (SS, 544). Arguably, this is supported by how pregnant women are treated as weak and fragile by the rest of society (Coe 2013). Cynthia Coe describes how men try to be chivalrous towards women in pregnancy, opening doors and carrying things for them. She accuses some women of enjoying this extra attention.[35]

[34] E.g. Diaz-Tello (2016).
[35] Coe's view of pregnant women might be considered a little harsh, as a heavily pregnant woman finds it very difficult to move around. But it is possible that this bad faith attitude of enjoying the extra attention is taken up in early pregnancy.

Beauvoir describes some women as treating the child as their prey. Throughout her life, woman is made to feel inferior to man. She then works out the frustrations of her position on the child (SS, 555). Okely (1986) claims that it is a myth that mothering is a natural instinct, or that the mother is always best placed to care for the child, for there are domineering and sadistic mothers do real lasting harm. Beauvoir describes mothers who dominate their child and reduce the child to a trained pet to show off (SS, 557). In terms of bad faith, the mother is here seeking to control another freedom in order to secure for herself a fixed nature as powerful.

Alternatively, the mother might use the child to flee her own transcendence in bad faith. She makes the child into the perfect, absolute end and denies her own free choice to care for her (Adams 2010). This relationship is not authentic because she does not acknowledge her subjectivity or the child's contingency. Another danger of maternal love is making the child into a Being that one can be proud of. In this scenario, the mother treats the child as an object and not as their own free person.

Some women submit to the ideal of motherhood as promoted by patriarchy, in order to deny their freedom by identifying with this positive fixed nature. These women feel that they gain some kind of objective value through having a family. If the mother is attempting to identify with this ideal, then this undermines her apparent generosity (SS, 556). She does not show true generosity because she is actually aiming at achieving her own God-project, rather than giving something to the infant freely and gratuitously.

One ideal of motherhood that the mother may try to identify with is the myth of the self-sacrificing mother. Guenther (2006) claims that the self-sacrificing mother giving selflessly has become an ideal for patriarchy, the elevated 'good mother'. She is worried that talk of the mother's gift will reinforce this ideal. In my discussion of the gift, I have described the pain that the mother bears for the Other during pregnancy. The good mother quietly bears the pain of the Other in self-sacrifice, similarly to the Virgin Mary, who quietly bore Jesus's death. This is an image that Kristeva takes up in *Black Sun*. She is critical of the idea of woman as self-sacrificing, but thinks a certain sacrifice by the mother is necessary for the child to emerge as a separate individual; the sacrifice of matricide (1989).

If these descriptions are accurate, then mother-child love under patriarchy is not authentic. If the mother is subjugated under patriarchy, then she is reduced to immanence and unable to pursue an authentic project. If the mother is also engaging in bad faith, then mother-child love cannot be authentic for it does not follow the project of disclosure. The bad faith projects of patriarchy are sedimented such that it is not possible to simply abandon them. In this case, my argument for the possibility of authentic love would have failed, because I would not have shown that it is practically possible in our current society.

This is a strong objection to my argument and I cannot definitively refute it. However, I will sketch out some possible responses that might defend my view.

First of all, I disagree with one of Beauvoir's claims, which is that the baby is unable to enter into reciprocal relations with its mother (SS, 556). I hope to have shown here and in the previous chapter that infants are capable of such relations. This is not a failing on Beauvoir's part—developments in psychology since *The Second Sex* was written have shown that the

infant's perception and cognition is more advanced than was previously believed. The infant is not following the God-project because she does not yet have the requisite self-awareness in order to do this, as I have argued above. So the problem for mother-child love here lies solely with the mother's project.

My argument has proceeded from a phenomenological description of mother-child love, based on studies in developmental psychology. These studies observe real mother-child relationships, taking place in our actual society. I conclude from the description of these studies that mother and child are following authentic love, although we may not yet understand how the mother overcomes the pressures of patriarchy. Of course, there will be some pathological relationships between mothers and children, where the mother acts in bad faith. But I do not think that my description of authentic mother-child relationships is rare in the real world. Based on the psychological studies described in Chapter 3, such relationships are a normal part of development for the majority of young children.

This is not to deny that mothers are oppressed under patriarchy. Rather, what I am claiming here is that phenomenological descriptions of early mother-child relationships seem to suggest that these relationships meet the criteria for authentic love. I argued earlier that there is evidence that the mother is following the project of disclosure and that her project demonstrates the features of authentic love, such as generosity and the gift.

The question is how to fit the phenomenological description of mother-child love with the societal phenomenon of patriarchy. One possible answer could be that mother-child love is an attempt to sediment authentic values that replace the bad faith of patriarchy. In order to overcome the bad faith projects that have become sedimented in our lives, we must engage

in a process of re-sedimentation. We must practice our new projects until they become equally sedimented; then we will have replaced our old values. The result of this is that authentic love is episodic—the loving relationship is sometimes authentic and sometimes in bad faith. The more that one engages in authentic love, the longer that each episode lasts. A relationship with moments of authentic love can become an authentically loving relationship over time.

The relationship between mother and child is an exception to the bad faith of patriarchy in moments where it attempts to overcome sedimentation and replace patriarchy with new values. Left alone, it could develop into a stable, authentic relationship. However, the infant will inevitably be socialised into the God-project, and thus bad faith will not be overcome. I shall explain this process in further detail in the next chapter, and also suggest that adult authentic love can be an exception to the bad faith of patriarchy.

The Communication Argument

I will now consider how my argument that mother-child love is authentic fits with the communication argument that I rejected in Chapter 2, and whether it suffers from the same objections.

To recall, the communication argument claims that authentic relations with others are possible because two subjects can apprehend each other as subjects in communication. I reject this argument because it does not address our fundamental conflict with the Other. According to Sartre, my primary encounter with the Other is conflictual, because it presents me with the anti-value of my freedom. Communication cannot be our primary encounter

with the Other because it cannot give us the Other as sufficiently Other. In the ideal case of communication, the two subjects occupy a joint perspective.

To some extent, my account rehabilitates the communication argument. I show that our original awareness of the Other is not conflictual, and that therefore authentic relations like communication are possible. It is true that there is a fundamental conflict with the Other, but this conflict is contingent, not necessary. It is the product of being socialised into the bad faith of the God-project as a child. But the infant is not born into the God-project. She is not even capable of engaging in the God-project, because she has yet to acquire a conceptual sense of self which the God-project will pretend is a fixed nature.

The infant still has an awareness of the Other as appropriately Other and not-me. In the loving Look, the infant is aware of herself as the object of the mother's love. Through her being as a loved object, the infant grasps the mother as a free conscious subject. This is an immediate, unreflective apprehension of the Other as a subject. The young infant lacks a fully developed conceptual sense of the Other, which I called a theory of mind. This is why the distinction between self and Other can sometimes be experienced as somewhat ambiguous. But the Other is immediately given as not-me when she feels herself to be the object of her mother's Look. We can see evidence of this in joint attention—when the infant invites the mother to attend with her, this suggests that she is aware that mother is a separate subject without direct access to her mind.

As the mother was also once an infant, her original encounter with the Other is also non-conflictual. However, in her relations with adults, there is now conflict, because she has been socialised into a project of bad faith. But because the primary encounter with the Other

did not immediately introduce conflict, it is possible for her to not pursue to non-conflictual relations with others in communication. This is why it is possible for the mother to engage in mutual comprehension with the infant.

My developmental account of the subject hence supplements the communication argument. Freed from the God-project, we are no longer desperately trying to avoid seeing the Other as a free subject. In protoconversations, both mother and infant pick up each other's intentions. They do not pretend to have fixed natures. Rather, they comprehend each other's subjectivity through their objective words and gestures.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that the love between mothers and children is authentic. Mothers and children do not pursue the God-project in love—rather, they pursue the project of disclosure. Mother-child love is a gift, generous, and reciprocal. It does not suffer from the problems outlined in *Being and Nothingness* that are bad faith love's downfall. Authentic mother-child love is still possible in a society marred by widespread patriarchy, as an attempt to re-sediment authentic values. My argument here has tried to rehabilitate the communication argument. Through my developmental account of the subject, I have shown how our first awareness of the Other is non-conflictual and yet still gives us the Other as not-me. This is what makes it possible for the mother to engage in non-conflictual communication with the infant.

In the next chapter, I will argue that the authenticity of mother-child love makes authentic romantic love between adults possible. I will show this without undermining Sartre's claim that we exist in a society of widespread bad faith. The main point of my argument will be that adult authentic love is the result of a dialectical process that encompasses and surpasses

the ambiguous union between mother and child and our mature awareness of our ontological separation from the Other.

Chapter 5. Authentic Romantic Love

In the previous chapter, I argued that the love between mother and child is authentic. I made my case through describing the features of the mother-child relationship in the ambiguous union, and I concluded that both mother and child are following the project of disclosure, rather than the God-project. Because mother and child are following the project of disclosure, they are capable of engaging in mutual comprehension. Comprehending each other as both subject and object allows them to escape the endless cycle of objectification (BN, 537-8).

This chapter will argue that it is authentic mother-child love which makes possible authentic romantic love between adults. This is my answer to the problem posed in Chapter 1: if bad faith is widespread throughout society, how can authentic love be possible? I have argued that our primary encounter with the Other is non-conflictual. Instead, conflict emerges as the result of being socialised into the bad faith of the God-project as children. But it is possible to re-enter a relation of authentic love as an adult because—in Sartre's words—life develops in spirals (PM, 106). We carry the experience of authentic mother-child love with us into adulthood. We are prompted to leave the bad faith of the God-project through the experience of a second ambiguous union, the erotic encounter. Authentic romantic love is the third moment in a dialectic which includes and surpasses the original ambiguous union and our feelings of alienation from the Other. Because of this, authentic romantic love exists as a tension between generosity and the desire to possess.

The notion of the spiral explains how it is possible for the mother to love the infant authentically. It is possible for the infant to love the mother authentically because she does not yet possess the mature sense of self required for bad faith. The mother, however, possesses a fully developed sense of self. The reason why she can abandon her God-project and adopt a project of disclosure is that she returns to her infant experience of authentic love in her relationship with her own child via the spiral.

Like authentic mother-child love, authentic romantic love is an attempt to sediment new values. This authenticity is initially episodic in romantic love relationships, for it takes many successive attempts to unseat the bad faith of the God-project. If authentic love is successfully sedimented, it can transform the whole of one's life from bad faith to authenticity. Therefore, it could be argued that mother-child love grounds the possibility of an ethics of authenticity, as Sartre seems to suggest in *Hope Now* (1996).

This is the argument that I shall present in the first part of this chapter. The second part will describe the features of authentic romantic love that tackle the problems for bad faith love identified by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. I hope to show that these features are recognisable in real life romantic relationships, and that therefore authentic romantic love is practically possible—that is to say, it actually occurs in our current society. By way of conclusion, I consider the ontological implications of my argument.

The Possibility of Authentic Romantic Love

How do Relations with Others Become Conflictual?

In this section, I will explain how our relations with others become conflictual. Chapters 3 and 4 aimed to demonstrate that the primary encounter with the Other—our original awareness of the Other as subject—is non-conflictual. However, after the infant has developed a mature sense of self, she is then socialised into the God-project. She faces constant pressure from other people to think of herself and others as having fixed natures. This is because if she acts in a way that suggests her radical freedom, she will undermine other people's God-projects (Webber 2018, 122). The first instance of this social pressure that she confronts is her 'primary alienation', which I shall explain below. Once she has adopted the God-project, she feels discomfort at the Look. She tries to objectify the Other to negate their freedom, which results in conflict. One common strategy to avoid the discomfort of the Look is the attitude of indifference. Even after experiencing authentic love as infants, we are motivated to adopt the attitude of indifference because it allows us to evade responsibility for our choices.

Mother-Child Love is Authentic

I will begin by briefly revisiting authentic love between mother and child because, as we shall see, this will become the first moment in the dialectic of authentic romantic love.

The infant first becomes aware of the Other through being the object of a loving Look. The loving Look reveals the Other as a subject and as not-me, because the infant experiences herself as the object of another consciousness's love and care. The infant's immediate awareness of herself as an object for another subject is what I have called the interpersonal sense of self (Ch. 3, 109). But the young infant has yet to acquire an ego, a conceptual sense of self, the ability to self-reflect, and a theory of mind. Because of this, she is not yet capable

of bad faith. She cannot conceive of herself as having a fixed nature. For this reason, the infant does not follow the God-project in her original relationship with the mother.

In Chapter 4, I argued that both mother and child are pursuing the project of disclosure in mother-child love. I provided a description of typical mother-child relationships and concluded that their behaviour reflects a fundamental project of seeking to unveil and create being. I also claimed that mother-child love is generous, a gift, and reciprocal.

The communication argument was rejected in Chapter 2 on the grounds that it had not addressed the issue of the fundamental conflict that arises from experiencing the Other as a subject. Through my developmental account, I have now shown that our original awareness of the Other is non-conflictual. It thus possible for there to be authentic relations with others as an adult, including through communication. But if our original awareness of the Other is not conflictual, how does interpersonal conflict arise? This is the question I shall answer in the next section.

The Infant's Socialisation into Bad Faith

I will now explain how the infant is socialised into bad faith. This explains why, even though our first relation to the Other is authentic and non-conflictual, bad faith is widespread throughout society. It becomes our 'natural attitude' to regard ourselves and others as having fixed natures (Santoni 2008). Our sense of alienation from the Other from within the God-project will become the second moment in the dialectic of authentic romantic love, which I shall explore in the next section.

To recall from the previous two chapters, the infant acquires the ability to engage in bad faith through the mother-child relationship. In bad faith, one pretends to have a fixed nature. That is to say, I pretend that my essence—my qualities, roles and traits—determines me. My social roles and qualities are given to me by the Other. With regard to my qualities, either the Other directly confers them upon me in the Look or I confer them upon myself in reflection, when I look at myself as if I was the Other. Social roles and identities are defined by other people such that I cannot reform them on my own.

In order to engage in bad faith, one must be able to self-reflect, have an ego, and have an awareness of one's ego. To utilise the Other in one's project of bad faith, one needs a theory of mind, a reflective awareness of the Other as a subject with the potential to help or hinder the God-project. The young infant lacks all of these capacities. They are acquired through an ongoing interaction with the Other, described in Chapter 3. Once the child has adopted a project of bad faith, the conceptual sense of self will come to dominate all of the other senses of self, in particular the interpersonal sense of self. One no longer has an immediate awareness of oneself as an object for the Other in interpersonal interactions, but rather an awareness of oneself as having certain qualities and social identities. Bad faith leads one to regard those qualities and identities as fixed. This is what Sartre calls impure reflection, and it becomes our natural attitude (BN, 229).

Once the infant has acquired the necessary capacities for bad faith, she is susceptible to social pressure to engage in bad faith. To recall from Chapter 1, freedom is an anti-value from within the bad faith of the God-project because it undermines one's attempt to have a fixed nature. If the Other demonstrates her freedom, this reminds me of my own freedom.

Therefore, those who follow the God-project put pressure on others to behave as if they also have a fixed nature, in order to avoid their own God-projects from being undermined.

The ambiguous union ends as the infant starts to demonstrate the capacities necessary for bad faith. The mother now experiences the infant as fully Other to herself, which can prompt her to re-adopt the God-project. For example, the child gradually learns to argue with or praise the mother. Children typically make statements like 'you're naughty' or 'you're pretty'. These sorts of statements assign fixed natures. The child is taught by society—including the mother herself—to conceive others in this way. The mother now experiences the infant's Look as alienating, and reacts by objectifying the infant. She has returned to following the God-project.

The first social pressure that the infant has to contend with can come from close family members. As the infant grows older and starts to talk, parents impose their ideas of her character upon her, often claiming that she takes after a relative (Cannon 1991). Sartre gives an example of parents alleging that their son has his father's good sense. Sartre interprets this as meaning that the parents believe that the child will take up the profession that they have chosen for him (FI, 1, 127-8). As soon as the infant can explore, she is labelled 'brave', 'shy' or 'anxious'; as soon as she can talk, she is 'chatty' or 'quiet'. To describe a quiet child as 'quiet' is not alienating in itself, but becomes alienating when the label is regarded as fixed. The child is pressured to fulfil that label as she grows up. For example, Sartre was told he was a genius by his grandfather and mother. Thus he spent his whole life trying to become a writer (W, 103, 157). This is the child's 'primary alienation', and it is her induction into bad faith.

Sartre discusses this primary alienation in an interview for Playboy magazine. He states that 'other people are hell insofar as you are plunged from birth into a situation to which you are obliged to submit.' Suppose that one is born the son of a very wealthy individual. Other people will have 'mapped out' your future for you; they do not create it directly, but they uphold a social order that predestines your future. If one is the son of a farmer, the decisions of businessmen and politicians have predestined that you will move to the city to work on the 'machines', as they need more men like you to operate them.

Sartre repeats this view in another interview, here with Rybalka and Contat on *The Family Idio*t:

> In a certain sense, all our lives are predestined from the moment we are born. We are destined for a certain type of action from the beginning by the situation of the family and society at any given moment…. Predestination is what replaces determinism for me. I believe we are not free—at least not these days, not for the moment—because we are all alienated. We are lost during childhood. Methods of education, the parent-child relationship, and so on, are what create the self, but it's a lost self. (1977, 116)

In Chapter 2, I explained that Sartre came to adopt the view that our projects are sedimented in childhood (Webber 2018, 125). In the above quote, Sartre says that we are all alienated from birth because we are born into a situation that sets out our destiny for us. The self or 'ego' that our parents help to create is a 'lost self' because it reflects the fixed nature that others have imposed on you. Over time, it becomes sedimented, and therefore difficult to replace with a new sense of one's ego.

We can now fully explain the transformation that Jean Genet undergoes when he is labelled a thief. Before he is caught stealing, being a thief is not Genet's fixed nature; he is just a child who steals. But when he is caught, he acquires the fixed nature of 'thief' and a thief's

destiny is imposed upon him. Genet's reaction to this is to embrace this destiny and thus pursue a life of crime (Webber 2018, 126).

After experiencing primary alienation and coming to adopt the God-project, the child now experiences the Other's Look as alienating. The Look reveals that the Other is free, because only a free consciousness could pass value-judgements upon her. If the Other is free, then this means that the child herself is free. To prevent herself from feeling anguish, she objectifies the Other.

This is how relations with others become conflictual. They are not conflictual in the sense that we are always fighting with one another, but rather in the sense that we are not at ease with one another, and we use each other as a means in our own self-focused God-projects. We are not at ease with each other because the Other can always remind us of our freedom. One is caught in an endless, unsatisfying cycle of either trying to possess the Other's ability to give me a fixed nature, or trying to objectify her so as to prevent her from reminding me of my freedom. From within the project of bad faith, the child actively avoids the mutual comprehension of early infancy. She now wants to be seen as having a fixed nature, not comprehended as a free subject.

One strategy commonly employed to avoid the discomfort of the Look is the attitude of indifference. This is one of the concrete relations that Sartre identifies as a way of pursuing the God-project (BN, 501-5). In the attitude of indifference, I treat people as mere machines or objects and pretend that they are not capable of looking at me. However, as we shall see, this attitude is impossible to maintain.

In the attitude of indifference, we treat other people like robots. I must perform an input (e.g. request a coffee) to receive an output (e.g. receive a coffee). I learn the keys that will activate their mechanisms—I learn how people function and how to operate them. Indifference is therefore a '*de facto* solipsism', a 'blindness' to the Other's subjectivity. I try to avoid others just as I try to avoid walls and material obstacles. This alleviates my anxiety, because I am no longer conscious of the fact that the Other's Look might reveal my radical freedom. I no longer feel as if I have an outside. It is possible to maintain this blindness for a long period of time, even over several years: 'some men die without—apart from some brief and terrifying moments of illumination—ever suspecting what the *other* is.' (BN, 504). Sartre repeats this point in *Baudelaire*. He claims, after the realisation that one and other people are unique conscious subjects, some people try to forget this moment as soon as they can (B, 19-20).

One can imagine going about one's daily life, encountering numerous strangers, and never regarding them as subjects with their own feelings, projects and mental life. Consider all of the people that we encounter on public transport or passing by on the street—in this brief contact, we do not typically regard them as radically free or even conscious.

But the attitude of indifference is doomed to failure for three reasons. Firstly, even if I try to interact with others as if they are robots, I cannot avoid being aware of myself as an object for the Other. In the supermarket, the shop assistant smiles at me, and I am immediately aware of myself as smiled-at by her. My attention is diverted to my outside. If try to suppress this immediate awareness of myself as an object, I will feel permanently uneasy. 'The ticket inspector, even if he is seen as a mere function, directs me in his very function towards my

being-outside, even though this being-outside is neither grasped nor able to be grasped. This explains my constant feeling of unease, of something missing.' (BN, 504).

Secondly, the God-project also wants to make use of the Other in order to secure a fixed nature that feels appropriately 'fixed'. I discussed this in Chapter 1. I want to identify with the object that I am for the Other (BN, 504). Without the Other, I would have no fixed qualities or social identities. In indifference, I am thus torn between wanting to avoid the Other's Look, and wanting to be an object for the Other.

Thirdly, indifference fails because it leaves me defenceless against the Look of the Other. 'I am seen without even being able to experience my being seen or able, through this ordeal, to protect myself against my 'being-seen'. I am possessed without being able to confront my possessor.' (BN, 505). Outside of indifference, I would react to the Look of the Other by looking back at her, making her into my object. But, if I am indifferent, I do not conceive of the Other as a subject and therefore there is nothing that I need to objectify. Furthermore, the attitude of indifference is self-contradictory because my motivation for following the project of indifference requires that I am aware that the Other is a subject, not an object.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre suggests that the attitude of indifference is widespread. When discussing the example of the waiter in bad faith, he argues that people want to be treated as robots and functions. The café waiter tries to be a waiter in the mode of being-in-itself. He wants to fulfil his role as if he were nothing more than that role. He acts as if he is a robot programmed for perfect customer service. We can find examples of this in modern life; for example, someone who works in a call centre, who has a flowchart of questions and answers to follow in the phone conversations. The person has little opportunity to engage in

free creativity in their job. Being good at these jobs might be defined as being as robot-like as possible, following the company's policies and procedures docilely and without deviation (BN, 102-3).

Sartre points out that people do not want to be served by a free waiter or a free greengrocer (BN, 103). This is because we experience the Look of the Other as alienating, as it reveals our freedom and undermines our God-projects. We will pay not to be troubled by the Other's radical freedom. One only has to observe a supermarket's self-checkouts to see that people prefer to be served by a machine.

Adopting the attitude of indifference strengthens our aversion to the Look, as it makes us experience a special type of shame. When the Other looks at me, he forces me to recognise him as a subject. I then feel uncomfortable about my previous attitude of indifference. Abstracting from whether it is morally permissible to treat the Other as an object, I feel uncomfortable knowing that the Other is a subject and that this whole time I have been pretending otherwise.

In all our interactions with the Other, there is a pure or original shame, where I immediately recognise myself as the object of the Other's Look (BN, 308, 358). But shame can also be the negative feeling of being ashamed of oneself. I am ashamed of myself when the Other gives me an uncomplimentary fixed nature (Webber 2009, 121). On my account, it is also possible to ashamed of oneself when the spell of indifference is broken. For example, suppose I treat my schoolteacher as a robot or machine most of the time. I do not speculate about the teacher's thoughts, feelings, projects, home life or inner mental life. And then, one day after class, I see from the doorway that my teacher is crying. She looks up at me. I

immediately recognise myself as this nosey person looking at her, and thus feel an original shame, but I am also suddenly compelled to acknowledge my teacher as a subject with her own life and emotions. I feel ashamed for not recognising her as such before. This does not necessarily have to be shame in a moral sense, but shame in the sense of a negative emotion. All this time, she was looking at me and I was free, and I pretended otherwise. This shame is uncomfortable, so I try to actively objectify the Other and deny her subjectivity once again. Hence the endless cycle of objectification continues.

So far, I have described how we are all socialised into bad faith as children, and I have suggested that a common strategy for dealing with the Other's Look is indifference. But, if one has experienced the harmony of authentic love as an infant, what is the motivation to keep pursuing bad faith relations with others, especially since the God-project is doomed to failure? One possible answer is that we are motivated by a desire to avoid taking responsibility for our choices. If the waiter confronted his freedom, he would see that he has no indefeasible obligation to get up every morning at five o'clock to set the tables. He would have to accept that this is his free choice. If he hates getting up at five o'clock, then he must accept that he freely chooses to do a job that he hates. If that is so, then he must consider why he continues with this job that he hates instead of searching for another one. Answering this question with involve some unpleasant self-examination: he might find that he is lazy, or that he finds the task of looking for a job too unpleasant, or, more likely, the economy is in bad shape and he cannot find a job elsewhere. If it is the latter, then, as a free being, he has a choice whether to conform or to rebel against the current government and economic system. And that is a difficult choice, with potentially very harmful consequences. All these disturbing truths face him if he recognises himself as a free being, and therefore it is easier for him to pretend that he has a fixed nature as a café waiter (BN, 103-4).

This example reveals why we all continue to pursue bad faith projects, even though they are doomed to failure. Most of us do not want to accept that we are free to break with our projects and adopt new ones; that there are no objective values compelling our actions, like the laws of physics compelling nature; and that we are responsible for our choices. We try to hide from this in bad faith, and this bad faith has become sedimented into our social institutions, culture and values.

This way of thinking supports various structures of oppression within society, including those of patriarchy, capitalism, and racism. To take capitalism as an example, it helps to maintain a capitalist economic system if we hide from ourselves our condition of exploitation. We do this by treating labour market conditions as external demands on us that we have no control over and cannot change. It is easier for us to conform with the system rather than confronting those who benefit from it and fighting for change.

This is why we are motivated to continue living in bad faith, even though it is possible for us to escape it. In the next section, I will show how it is possible to overcome bad faith in relations of authentic love as an adult. I will suggest that experiencing an authentically loving relationship could supply one with the means to overcome bad faith in all of one's projects.

How is it Possible to Experience Authentic Love as an Adult?

In this section, I shall demonstrate how it is possible to love authentically as an adult, despite the existence of widespread bad faith. I will begin by showing how romantic love is possible as an adult, before showing how maternal authentic love is possible.

Romantic Love

Authentic romantic love is possible because authentic mother-child love lies at the heart of a life that develops in spirals, such that one can return to it as an adult. We are prompted to return to authentic love by our experience of a second ambiguous union—the erotic encounter. Authentic romantic love is the third moment in a dialectic that overcomes and incorporates the original ambiguous union and our later sense of alienation from the Other. From within the project of romantic love, the Other is the safe Other with whom I can be authentic within the bad faith of society. Patriarchy is an obstacle to achieving this kind of love, but authentic romantic love is an attempt to resediment new values that replace the values of bad faith. I will begin this account of romantic love by exploring the notion of the spiral.

The Spiral

In the previous two chapters, I argued that our original awareness of the Other as subject is non-conflictual. Therefore, it is possible for us to have authentic relations with others as adults. Ontologically, this is because life develops like a spiral, and at the heart of the spiral is mother-child love. This is how it is possible for us to adopt the project of disclosure as adults and try to unlearn the values of the God-project.

The notion of the spiral can be found in Sartre's later works, *The Problem of Method* and *The Family Idiot*. The idea of the spiral explains how an individual's way of being-in-the-world is formed. Childhood lies at the heart of the spiral, where our possibilities are set out, in accordance with our situation in time and place and the particular family that we are born into. Throughout our lives, we surpass and yet maintain our childhoods. All of these moments of surpassing are integrated into one meaningful totality, which is one's way of being-in-the-world. At each layer of the spiral, new experiences are integrated into our existing self-image and behaviour. 'For this reason a life develops in spirals; it passes again and again by the same points but at different levels of integration and complexity' (PM, 106).

In Sartre's view, it is the roles that are imposed on us in childhood that lie at the heart of the spiral, and it is these that get carried into the future. But prior to our primary alienation, we experience the authentic love of the mother-child relationship. Therefore, I hold that it is our experience of the original ambiguous union and authentic love that lies at the centre of the spiral.

The original ambiguous union is in the past and can never be returned to in exactly the same form, but its particular mode of relating to the Other is maintained as a possibility throughout one's life. Primary alienation is experienced as a leap in the spiral onto another level. It, too, is integrated into the meaningful totality and is maintained and surpassed throughout one's life. Authentic romantic love is yet another leap in the spiral. At its heart is the original authentic love between mother and child that makes it possible. We are able to engage in loving Looks and comprehend the Other, despite widespread bad faith, because of the mother's love that lies at the heart of the spiral. Without this love, we will struggle to enter

into loving relationships as an adult. Sartre claims that this was the case for Gustave Flaubert, who struggled to enter into reciprocal relations with others because he did experience reciprocity with his mother as an infant (FI, 1, 130-33).

The Erotic Encounter

Authentic love between mother and child takes place within the ambiguous union. The ambiguous union facilitates an authentic relation to the Other, because the infant is not experienced as fully Other and thus her Look is not alienating. But two adults both have fully developed senses of self and are immersed in the bad faith of the God-project. They are motivated to keep objectifying each other and to avoid comprehension.

However, as adults we can experience a second ambiguous union, which can prompt the adoption of an authentic relation to the Other. This is the erotic encounter, as conceived of by Simone de Beauvoir, who describes it as 'ambiguous unity' (MWBS, 33). The 'erotic encounter' refers to the physical intimacy and sexual desire of adult lovers. Beauvoir's account of sexual desire differs considerably from Sartre's. In *Being and Nothingness*, sexual desire is just another manifestation of the God-project. It is an instance of the second primary attitude, where I try to make the Other into a mere object, in order to take away her power to objectify me (BN, 481-2). According to Sartre, desire does not just aim at possessing the Other as a material object (BN, 509); what one desires is incarnate consciousness, or consciousness made flesh. But the project of desire will inevitably fail. One reason for why this is the case is because the lover starts to seek only his own incarnation and pleasure. He treats the Other like a mere body and means to his end. Then she is reduced to an instrument and no longer an incarnate consciousness.

However, for Beauvoir, the erotic encounter is part of authentic love. For both Beauvoir and Sartre, sexual desire is not a mere biological function, but an intentional phenomenon (BN, 505-9; Bergoffen 1997). Beauvoir describes sexuality as: 'an intentionality that the body experiences, lives through, an intentionality that exists in relation to other bodies and that conforms to the general rhythm of life. It takes form in relation to a world which it provides with an erotic dimension' (1973, 472, quoted in Bergoffen, 1997, 189). The erotic encounter is therefore not just the physical act of sex itself, but a way of existing in the world with the Other. It gives the whole world an erotic atmosphere.[36]

The erotic encounter reveals to the lovers their ambiguous existence as both facticity and transcendence. It unveils ambiguity through 'emotional intoxication'. 'The state of emotional intoxication allows one to grasp existence in one's self and in the other, as both subjectivity and passivity. The two partners merge in this ambiguous unity; each one is freed of his own presence and achieves immediate communication with the other.' (MWBS, 33)

'Emotional intoxication' is Beauvoir's term for the lovers' experience of the ambiguous union in the erotic encounter. For Beauvoir, emotion is linked to the project of disclosure. Emotions put us into direct contact with the world; they do not distort it (Vintges 1996, 52). In the erotic encounter, emotions disclose the ambiguous existence of myself, the Other, and the relation between us.

To better understand Beauvoir's notion of emotional intoxication, one can contrast it with the lack of emotional intoxication experienced by the Marquis de Sade. According to

[36] See also BN, 517.

Beauvoir, although Sade did experience sexual desire, he never experienced this other crucial part of the erotic encounter.

> There is, on the other hand, an experience which he seems never to have known: that of emotional intoxication. Never in his stories does sensual pleasure appear as self-forgetfulness, swooning or abandon….The male aggression of the Sadist hero is never softened by the usual transformation of the body into flesh. He never, for an instant, loses himself in his animal nature; he remains so lucid, so cerebral, that philosophic discourse, far from dampening his ardour, acts as an aphrodisiac. We see how desire and pleasure explode in furious attacks upon this cold tense body, proof against all enchantment. They do not constitute a living experience within the framework of the subject's psycho-physiological unity. As a result of this immoderateness, the sexual act creates the illusion of sovereign pleasure, which gives it incomparable value in de Sade's eyes. (MWBS, 32-3)

Sade is incapable of emotional intoxication, so he is the 'Descartes of the bedroom' (Bergoffen 1997)—he is cold and removed. He remains completely absorbed in himself and refuses to embrace the material side of his existence. Therefore he is unable to have a complete experience of the erotic encounter.

In emotional intoxication, we abandon ourselves to the flesh and become enchanted by the Other. We forget our self-absorbed God-project and instead adopt the project of disclosure, which is a project of generosity (Bergoffen 1997). The emotionally intoxicated lover does not seek his own pleasure at the expense of the Other, but instead aims to mutually give and receive pleasure. Hence eroticism is a 'movement towards the *Other*, and this is its essential character' (SS, 467), because one specifically aims at the Other as other, in order to give another person pleasure.

It is through emotional intoxication that the erotic encounter unveils the ambiguous existence of each lover. In emotional intoxication, each lover lives themselves as flesh

(incarnate consciousness), so each experiences themselves as both subjectivity and passivity. ‘The erotic experience is one that most poignantly reveals to human beings their ambiguous condition; they experience it as flesh and as spirit, as the other and as subject.’ (SS, 416). This opens up the possibility for an authentic relation with the Other, as authentic relations require that one grasps the Other as both subject and object. ‘All love demands the duality of a subject and an object.’ (SS, 667).

The lovers in the erotic encounter do not become a joint subject. Rather, each person’s body is incorporated into the other’s ecological sense of self. To recall, the ecological sense of self emerges from what is perceived in the environment, and it can open up to include anything that is carried with you or carries you (Neisser 1988). In the erotic encounter, bodies physically join together, resulting in an expansion of each lover’s ecological sense of self, but each consciousness remains individuated by non-positional self-consciousness. Beauvoir claims that some women think that the penis is part of their body, and some men think they are the women they penetrate (SS, 415).

Ambiguous unity is also realised through the loving touch or ‘caress’. As I explained in Chapter 4, touch is the sense that reveals oneself as both subject and object. In the erotic encounter, the caress incarnates consciousness: ‘In caressing the Other I give to her flesh, through my caress, beneath my fingers. A caress is the set of rituals that *incarnates* the Other.’ (BN, 514). The caress brings consciousness to the surface of the body so that the Other subject can be in embodied contact with it. In this way, loving touch unveils us as both transcending subject and the passivity of flesh.

In many ways, the ambiguous union of the erotic encounter resembles the ambiguous union between mother and child. This is because the latter is the condition of the former, a view which Beauvoir herself seems to share when she blames Sade's inability to experience emotional intoxication on his childhood. 'The curse which weighed upon de Sade—and which only his childhood could explain—was this 'autism' which prevented him from ever forgetting himself or being genuinely aware of the reality of the other person.' (MWBS, 33).

The Dialectic

The erotic encounter is an ambiguous union that allows us to grasp the Other as both subject and object. Therefore, it is through the erotic encounter that we can return to authentic love. This does not mean that authentic love takes place only in the erotic encounter. Rather, the erotic encounter enables us to transcend the cycle of endless of objectification with the Other (BN, 482, 537-8).

But this second ambiguous union is not the same as the original ambiguous union between mother and child. Because life develops in spirals, our alienation from the Other must be incorporated into the adult ambiguous union. Authentic romantic love is the third moment in a dialectic that encompasses and surpasses the original ambiguous union and our alienation from the Other.

The first moment of this dialectic is our original ambiguous union with the mother, where, as infants, we are not yet capable of bad faith. The second moment of the dialectic is our mature awareness of the Other as she is presented to us in bad faith. This is our explicit understanding of the Other as a subject who is not me, experienced as an alienating freedom

that threatens my God-project. The two earlier moments are not completely negated in the third moment of the adult ambiguous union; rather, they are preserved in the sense that they remain active in its definition. The third moment requires the initial ambiguous union and the alienating separation from the Other in order to be what it is.

Our alienation from the Other appears in authentic romantic love as a desire to appropriate. In the God-project, we desire to appropriate Other's ability to make us into an object, in order to secure for ourselves a fixed nature. Moreover, the God-project is itself a project to appropriate because it seeks to appropriate being to the for-itself (Ch. 4, 159). Monogamous love includes a desire to possess by definition. To love someone is to single them out as special amongst others, and to desire to be loved by this special Other in return. But authentic romantic love is also generous. It is a desire to disclose the being of the Other and bestow value upon her for the Other's sake. The desire to be generous is inherited from the original ambiguous union between mother and child.

Both Sartre[37] and Beauvoir recognise that authentic love is a tension between generosity and possessiveness. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir states:

> In all love—sexual or maternal—there is both greed and generosity, the desire to possess the other and to give the other everything; but when both women are narcissists, caressing an extension of themselves or their reflection in the child or the lover, the mother and the lesbian are notably similar. (SS, 430).[38]

[37] Sartre describes authentic love as a tension at least twice in the *Notebooks* (NE, 414-5; 477).
[38] I disagree with Beauvoir that maternal love is possessive, at least, from within the ambiguous union. I have already discussed my opinion on Beauvoir's account of motherhood in the previous chapter (185-191).

Possession must be balanced with acceptance that the love is contingent—that the lovers are not soulmates. One must also accept that love cannot be perfectly secure.[39] An authentic lover wants his beloved to have relationships with other people and trusts her not to deceive him about the nature of her feelings towards them. But love must maintain a tension between possession and permissiveness. If the lover is too relaxed about his beloved's other relationships, then she will no longer feel like she is special amongst all others for him.

Here I have argued that authentic romantic love is the third moment in a dialectic that surpasses both the original ambiguous union and our alienation from the Other. This could be read as suggesting that romantic love is somehow more authentic than mother-child love, because the former surpasses the latter, but this is not the case. Romantic love and mother-child love do not differ in degree of authenticity, but in type of love. Mother-child love is authentic in its own right. It satisfies the ontological criteria for authentic love as set out by Sartre in the *Notebooks* and escapes the problems for love that he identifies in *Being and Nothingness*. We should not judge mother-child love as less authentic than romantic love on the grounds that it does not include our mature awareness of the Other, because the infant is not yet capable of the mature awareness. It is impossible for there to be a form of mother-child love which includes this.

It is true that authentic romantic love is more difficult to achieve. Any authentic adult relation has to deal with our mature awareness of the Other as an alienating radical freedom. But romantic love is authentic on its own terms, which are different to those of mother-child love, and this should not detract from the authenticity of mother-child love.

[39] I shall discuss this further in the second part of this chapter (231).

The Safe Other

In adult authentic love, our attitude to the Other changes. Before authentic love, most of the time we are in the attitude of indifference, where we regard others as mere objects. When we do grasp the radical freedom of the Other, we experience it as a threat. But authentic romantic love links together our original harmony with the Other and our awareness of the Other as an uncontrollable freedom. The Other remains other, but there is also a closeness, an intimacy between us, which takes us back to the first ambiguous union. This particular Other that I love is different from all other people. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre says that I am safe within the beloved's consciousness:

> If this result could be achieved, the first consequence would be that I was *safe* within the other's consciousness. That is because, in the first place, the reason for my worry and my shame is that I apprehend and experience myself in my being-for-the-Other as something that can always be surpassed towards something else, purely as the object of a value judgement, purely a means, purely a tool. My worry arises from the fact that I necessarily and freely accept this being that an Other, in absolute freedom, makes me be: 'God only knows what I am for her! God knows how she thinks of me.' That means: 'God knows how she makes me be' (BN , 488-9)

In the bad faith of indifference, other people regard me as a mere means or tool. I am an object amongst others, which can always be surpassed. If the Other would make me into an absolute value and centre of meaning, then I would no longer worry about appearing as a mere means or tool. This is the solution of bad faith love, but authentic love can also satisfy my desire not to be a mere object. In authentic love, my beloved never regards me as a mere means to an end; rather, she comprehends me as a free subject. I am immediately aware that she does not see me as a mere object amongst others because she helps me with my projects and she communicates with me. If I do feel alienated by my beloved's Look, it is a sign that our love is not authentic.

That the Other comprehends me as a freedom does not mean that she never regards me as an object. At times, I may want the Other to pay attention to my material existence—for example, I might want her to find me attractive. But, even as she finds my material existence attractive, she is not attracted to a mere object, but to the material being of a human subject. So I try to draw her attention to my material existence as a dimension of myself as both a material and a transcending human being.

The 'safe' Other is still an Other to me. My beloved is still a separate freedom, with different projects, opinions, and tastes. Our ontological separation can never be eliminated. But, at the same time, my beloved is also the Other to whom I am closest. For many adults, one's relation to one's partner is the closest a person can possibly be to another person. It is a completely different relationship compared to one's relationships with other people—with perhaps the exception of one's close family members. My beloved is the Other whom I understand the most. I know what she thinks about a number of different topics, I know her secrets, her likes, her dislikes; I can predict what she is going to say. But this is all only probable knowledge (c.f. BN, 352), for she is still free and can surprise me. The otherness of my beloved and her closeness to me are therefore held in tension. Our ontological separation prevents us from ever merging, but we are kept bound together by the closeness that results from our free commitment.

This special relation to the Other develops over time—it takes many interactions with the Other to be rid of the attitude of indifference and to consistently comprehend each other as subjects. That is why authentic love can only exist in ongoing long-term relationships with

the Other—authentic love is not 'love at first sight'. The project must be continually pursued until it replaces the sedimented project of bad faith.

Patriarchy

Throughout this thesis, I have argued for the existence of widespread bad faith throughout society. One type of bad faith that I identified was the bad faith of patriarchy. In Chapter 2, I argued that patriarchy poses a particular problem for authentic romantic love. It limits woman's transcendence and teaches her to be subservient to man. If authentic romantic love is to be practically possible, I need to show how it overcomes the bad faith of patriarchy.

My answer to this is that, like mother-child love, authentic romantic love is an attempt to sediment alternative values. Lovers practice their new projects and continue to pursue them until they replace their old projects. Up to the point where the new projects become equally sedimented, we will continue to relapse into the old values. This is why authentic love is episodic. It is also why, the more one engages in authentic love, the longer each episode of authenticity lasts. A relationship with moments of authentic love can become an authentically loving relationship over time.

After sedimentation, authentic romantic love provides a space for adults to return to a time before their socialisation into patriarchy. This does not mean that we suddenly and radically overcome all of our socialisation, but rather that, from within the relationship, we can challenge our social identity. For example, a man might choose to open up about his feelings to his beloved. He does not have to conform to all the patriarchal stereotypes of men, such as being strong, liking beer, or liking football. Similarly, a woman might engage in what

society considers to be ‘gross’ or ‘disgusting’ behaviour around her lover, challenging the social expectation that she has to be ‘ladylike’. There is an understanding that this behaviour is private between the lovers. This temporary reprieve from patriarchy is possible because the beloved is the safe other who comprehends and does not objectify.

A Necessary or Sufficient Condition for Love?

To conclude my account of how authentic romantic love is possible, I will consider whether the experience of authentic mother-child love is a necessary or sufficient condition for authentic romantic love.

Authentic mother-child love is not a necessary condition for experiencing authentic love as an adult. There are many people who have experienced terrible childhoods who still experience authentic love as adults. But authentic mother-child love is also not a sufficient condition for experiencing authentic romantic love, as experiencing the latter depends on finding a suitable partner. Rather, I hold that authentic mother-child love is a sufficient condition for possessing the capacity for authentic love as an adult. This claim can be spelled out in terms of ‘healthy’ relationships. If one has experienced a healthy, secure, loving relationship with one’s mother, then one will be capable of healthy, loving relationships as an adult, all other things being equal. The term ‘authentic’ refers to particular ontological structures of love, whereas ‘healthy’ refers to the absence of an empirically identifiable pathology. But these two terms could pick out different aspects of one and the same phenomenon, such that a healthy mother-child relationship and authentic mother-child love are actually the same thing. This also constitutes a defence against the claim that my account

is too demanding of mothers—'authentic love' just describes a 'healthy' relationship between mothers and infants, as currently understood by psychologists.

Although I do not hold that authentic mother-child love is necessary for the capacity for authentic love as an adult, I maintain that authentic love as an adult is much harder to achieve without the experience of authentic mother-child love. Findings in psychology support this position. For example, according to attachment theory, the type of attachment that one forms to one's parents will determine the attachments that one forms to one's adult partners. If one had an 'insecure' attachment to one's primary caregiver, then one is likely to have an insecure attachment to one's partner (Mirvish and Rechtin 1998). To rectify this would likely require that one receives therapy as an adult. But the therapist who helps you will likely be a well-adjusted adult, as a result of either having undergone therapy herself or having experienced authentic love as an infant. So the experience authentic love as an infant would still lie at the root of one's acquired capacity for authentic romantic love as an adult.

Maternal Love

In Chapter 4, I argued that the mother loves the infant authentically because we can observe this to be the case from a description of their relationship. This was not a satisfying answer, however, as it did not describe how it is possible for the mother to abandon the bad faith of the God-project. Using the idea of the spiral, we are now able to provide such an explanation.

The mother can abandon her God-project because of the spiral. Experiencing the ambiguous union of early infancy with her child, she is prompted to return to her own experience of mother-child love as an infant. Her experience of being loved as an infant is what enables

her to love her child, to communicate with the infant and to comprehend the infant as a subject. She mirrors the behaviour of her own mother towards herself, and her own experience of love as an infant, when she interacts with her child.

This idea of a maternal love that spirals across generations can be found in the works of Julia Kristeva (1989). On Guenther's reading of Kristeva (2006, 116), maternal love is held to be neither a circle nor a line, but a spiral; it turns back on itself without returning to the beginning. It reproduces a pattern but it is not an exact copy. The mother's generosity draws on her own experience of maternal love, but the two are not identical (Guenther 2006). Maternal love makes loving authentically as an adult possible, both as a partner and as a mother. In this sense, the mother is the one who carries love forward throughout the generations.

The idea of childhood being repeated in motherhood can be found in *The Family Idiot*. Caroline Flaubert wanted to give birth to a daughter so that she could give the daughter the love and care that she herself had never experienced. Caroline Flaubert was an orphan: her mother died giving birth to her and her father died when she was a young girl. She suffered a disrupted childhood, moving between different households. Sartre cites as proof of this desire the fact that she named her daughter 'Caroline'. The younger Caroline became her mother's favourite. Mme Flaubert 'made love to herself so that she could at least give the tenderness that she had not received.' (FI, 1, 82).

Could Authenticity Replace Bad Faith?

I have argued that authentic love is an attempt to sediment new values of authenticity that replace the values of bad faith. I will now consider whether it is possible to truly overcome bad faith via this mechanism.

Although the mother is able to temporarily return to the authentic love of her own infancy, we have seen that this love inevitably ends when her child is socialised into bad faith. Even if the mother resists primary alienation, the child will be exposed to bad faith from other family members, friends, teachers, books, games, television, and so on. Authentic romantic love has a stability that is lacking in authentic mother-child love, because the two lovers have already been socialised into bad faith. Therefore, it has a better chance at successfully sedimenting the new values of authenticity. Of course, the lovers will still face pressure from society to behave in bad faith. But, in authenticity, they might realise that they must resist these pressures in their relationship—for example, the gendered fixed natures that are imposed on us by patriarchy. Authentic lovers might then adopt the project of opposing patriarchy not just in their own relationship but throughout society. Thus one comes to adopt a project of authenticity across one's whole life.

Thus the authentic love experienced as an infant has the potential to bring about a complete transformation of one's values from bad faith to authenticity, via the spiral and romantic love. Instead of pretending to have a fixed nature, one comprehends and respects the freedom of one's fellow human beings. Thus authentic love is the way in which we can overcome the bad faith of the God-project. Individuals transformed through authentic love could then initiate and perform the changes to our culture and institutions that are necessary to overcome bad faith as a widespread social phenomenon.

As I mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, in *Hope Now*, Sartre himself recognises that mothers are the source of an ethical relation that could transform society. He claims that ethics depends on the fact that every human has a mother. Fraternity (i.e. an authentic relation with the Other) is only possible because each human being is born of a mother (HN, 87). Sartre claims that this fraternal relation will become the basis of a future human community (Lacoste 2007). If we remember the fact that we all have mothers, that we all had to be born, we will see that we are all brothers and sisters as human beings. We will then be able to have ethical relations with each other. There will exist a tenderness between us like that which originally existed between mother and child (Colombel 2000, 742-3).

Authentic Romantic Love and the Problems of Bad Faith Love

The first part of this chapter explained how authentic romantic love is possible despite the existence of widespread bad faith. It is possible of the authentic love that exists between mother and child. The infant first exists in an ambiguous union with her mother, and her first experience of Other as subject takes place in a loving, non-conflictual Look. Later on, the child acquires the ability to reflect upon her ontological separation from the Other and to objectify herself. She is socialised into bad faith and the Look becomes alienating. However, prompted by the ambiguous union of the erotic encounter, it is possible to return to a non-conflictual, authentic way of existing with the Other. This is authentic romantic love, and it is the synthesis of the original ambiguous union and our alienated separation from the Other.

In this section, I will show how authentic romantic love overcomes the problems for bad faith love that Sartre sets out in *Being and Nothingness*. These problems do not simply disappear in authentic romantic love; rather, they are encompassed and surpassed in a

dialectic movement. Although conflicting desires continue to exist, one's attitude towards them changes. Through describing the features of authentic romantic love, I hope to depict a type of love that is recognisable in our own lives, and therefore show that authentic romantic love exists in practice.

Generosity and Disclosure

Before I address the problems of bad faith love, I will argue that authentic romantic love follows the project of disclosure and is generous. However, as I mentioned earlier, there also exists a desire to possess in authentic romantic love.

The project of disclosure is generous in the sense of giving more than what is expected and giving for the Other's sake. The generous act is done for nothing; it does not expect to receive anything in return. The project of disclosure seeks to unveil the Other's being and give it meaning and value, rather than to appropriate it for one's own God-project (Bergoffen 1997). It is generous to disclose the Other as Other. Generosity refuses to appropriate or assimilate the Other. Instead, one recognises her as the free subject that is not-me (EA, 67).

Lovers follow the project of disclosure in the erotic encounter. In the erotic encounter, lovers seek to reveal each other and themselves as erotic beings, therefore unveiling new dimensions of their existence. Loving the Other's flesh gives her contingent material being a meaning—it is that which I love and therefore it has value (NE, 506-8).

A condition of experiencing generosity in the erotic encounter is that lovers recognise each other as equals. Then, Beauvoir states, the erotic encounter can become a free exchange.

Lovers must learn to celebrate their differences such that alterity is no longer hostile. Both women and men can then experience their passivity and their virility.

> All the treasures of virility and femininity reflecting off and re-appropriating each other make a moving and ecstatic unity. What is necessary for such harmony are not technical refinements but rather, on the basis of an immediate erotic attraction, a reciprocal generosity of body and soul. (SS, 415)

All generosity involves an element of risk and vulnerability. When I comprehend the Other, there is always a risk that she might not recognise my freedom in return and instead try to objectify me in bad faith (NE, 282). There is also a risk that the Other might not recognise my generosity and instead take my gift for granted, or think that what I do is owed to her or that she now owes me. She might try to exploit my generosity, which is a risk for women in particular who are expected under patriarchy to be generous (Guenther 2006; Bergoffen 1997).

Another way in which patriarchy leaves one vulnerable in the erotic encounter results from the norms and expectations placed on men and women. Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* gives a detailed description of women's vulnerability on their wedding night. Under social pressure to look and behave in a certain way, these women are embarrassed to get undressed in front of their new husbands and dread having sex with them (SS, 392). At the same time, men suffer from performance anxiety and fear being laughed at by women. Both are immersed in the bad faith of patriarchy and are therefore vulnerable to the gaze of the Other.

Furthermore, in the erotic encounter, one is vulnerable to physical pain. Beauvoir considers pain to be a part of the erotic encounter. Such pain expresses a 'desire to merge and not to destroy' (SS, 412). As I explained in Chapter 4 (159), the desire to merge is the desire to

possess—the desire to incorporate the Other, possessing her entirely. Although the project of romantic love aims to renounce all possession (EA, 67), it is never able to completely overcome it. This is why authentic romantic love is a tension between possessiveness and generosity. If one did not care about whether one's partner loves you in return, we would not consider this to be a genuine case of romantic love. But, ultimately, generosity must overcome possessiveness in authentic love, otherwise we return to bad faith love. An element of possessiveness continues into authentic romantic love, otherwise it would not be 'romantic', but generosity must dominate.

Authentic lovers respond to risk and vulnerability with trust. Men and women trust each other not to refuse the gift of comprehension. They need to trust that authentic love will prevail, and not the God-project. They must accept their material existence and trust the Other to keep it safe.

In our society, bodies are regulated by all sorts of norms, many of which are gendered. It is embarrassing when one's body does something outside of one's control, which is particularly a risk in the erotic encounter. But authentic lovers embrace each other as a total person, which includes their material body (Ch. 1, 53; Jeanson 1974). They do not find their material existence to be degrading, as it is in this mode of being that they offer themselves to each other as a gift (Bergoffen 1997). If my beloved loves my body in all respects, then even the parts that I find shameful become something valuable, because someone has chosen to value it.

I shall now consider the problems for bad faith love that Sartre identifies in *Being and Nothingness*, and demonstrate how authentic romantic love overcomes them.

Devotion and Reciprocity

To recall from Chapter 1, Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* claims that love is an infinite regress. To love is to wish to be loved—the lover wants his beloved to be completely devoted to him and to make him into an absolute value (BN, 497). He desires a love that is unconditional and that is not premised on the condition of him loving her first. But this kind of devotion is impossible to secure in romantic love. If the beloved is devoted to him, then she also desires to be loved by him. This is love's first destruction: constant dissatisfaction.

Like authentic mother-child love, authentic romantic love overcomes these problems through the project of disclosure. I unveil the being of the beloved and bestow value upon her as the unique individual that she is (Singer 2009; Nyholm and Frank 2017). Love is therefore primarily about wanting to value the Other, not about wanting to be valued oneself. This is not to deny that the lover desires to be loved in return by his beloved; rather, I am making a claim about which desire comes first. In my view, the lover first loves and values the beloved, and then he wants to be loved and valued by her in return. In romantic love, one would not desire for someone to love you if one did not already love them. Therefore each lover first loves the other, and then wishes to be loved in return.

Although the lover wishes to be loved in return, authentic love does not expect this or demand this of the Other; if it did, it could not be authentic love, because it would not respect the Other's freedom and her otherness. Any love that the beloved returns is not owed to me. The Other is never obliged to love me. This is another respect in which love is generous.

This description of the love fits better our understanding of real-life healthy relationships. In such relationships, lovers do not try to assimilate each other but rather respect and value their differences. The lover does not use the beloved to achieve his own ends; instead, he puts his beloved first, before himself.

The authentic lover respects that his beloved has her own projects and interests. He generously commits to help her pursue her projects, with the aim of enriching them both. He accepts that love does not trump all other commitments. Sartre alludes to this in his play, *The Chips Are Down*. One of the protagonists, Pierre, says that he loves his supposed soulmate, Eve, but he does not have the 'right' to let his fellow resistance fighters down (1952, 122). Love gives us strong obligations, but these obligations are not indefeasible. Authentic lovers accept this.

Freedom and Security

A further problem for love that Sartre identifies is that the lover wants love to be freely given but, at the same time, he does not want his beloved to be free to leave. If love is not freely given, it puts into question whether it is genuinely love. Furthermore, one can only be valued by a free being. But, at the same time, the lover wants to guarantee that the beloved will never stop loving him. He is frightened by the fact that his happiness depends on the actions of a free and uncontrollable being. This leads to what Sartre considers to be love's second destruction: constant insecurity.

The spiral can help lovers to overcome this problem. In Chapter 4, I argued that the clash between freedom and security is much less of a problem for mother-child love. Although

the mother freely chooses to love her child, their relation is a permanent bond. We each only have one mother. A mother and her child will never become totally meaningless to each other, unlike in the case when romantic love ends.

This love that is both free and secure lies at the heart of the spiral, and we can access it in authentic romantic love. As an adult, the lover knows that the beloved is free to stop loving him at any time, but he can overcome his insecurity by drawing on the mother's love at the centre of the spiral. He can then trust his beloved's free choice to love him and feel secure in the relationship. This is not self-deception; rather, his experience of security as an infant enables him to trust that his beloved will not abandon him. The mother's love allows adults to respond with trust to the uncontrollable freedom of the Other.

The authentic lovers accept the contingency of the existence of their love. Accepting the contingency of love is a consequence of accepting the Other's freedom. The Other as radically free always has the potential to end our love, which reveals that our love does not exist necessarily. In the *Notebooks*, Sartre agrees that authentic lovers must accept the contingency of their individual existence and of their love:

> Consciousness that is able to grasp the necessity of this gratuitousness can and must love gratuitousness as an *a priori* condition of its existence and of the salvation of being. (NE, 491-2).
>
> Here we are able to understand what *loving* signifies in its authentic sense. I love if I *create* the contingent finitude of the Other as being-within-the-world in assuming my own subjective finitude and in *willing* this subjective finitude…

In authentic love, the lovers do not strive for the necessary existence of God but instead unveil each other as situated, embodied, finite beings. Accepting contingency is an example

of what Sartre calls ‘pure reflection’ (NE, 473). Instead of deceiving oneself that love is necessary and determined, the lovers embrace it as contingent.

Accepting contingency means accepting that the Other is free to leave. The authentic lover embraces this risk, because he loves the Other’s freedom. He does not try to jealously guard his beloved from the rest of the world—he wants her to have relationships with other people and to pursue her own projects. If he did not tolerate this, then she would lose that which he loves about her: her freedom. Therefore, he must accept the risk that the Other could leave him.

One source of security for the authentic lovers is that their commitment is sedimented over time, but it is never impossible for it to be abandoned. According to Webber, projects become more sedimented the longer that one pursues them. As one continues to pursue the project of love, the project gains its own inertia. It is harder to abandon, for it can only be replaced by sedimenting an alternative set of values. The longer that one chooses to uphold the commitment, the stronger that it becomes. Because of this, one does not expect long-term lovers to abandon each other with no prior warning. When lovers do seem abandon each other out of the blue, there have likely been problems in the relationship for a long time which they have failed to notice. Authentic lovers are non-thetically aware of this. They know that the longer they uphold their commitment, the stronger it will become. But they also accept that it is their choice to continue to uphold and strengthen their commitment. They realise that they are free to fall out of love with each other, but they choose not to. They continue to engage in activities and practices that will strengthen their relationship.

Freedom and Determination

In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre also describes the lovers' conflicting desires for freedom and determination. As explained above, lovers want love to be freely given. But, at the same time, they want their love to have been determined. They are frightened by the possibility that they might not have met, because both themselves and their lives have changed so much since meeting each other. Having undergone such a radical personal transformation, it feels like considering the possibility that they themselves would not have existed. Lovers therefore do not want their meeting to have been due to chance. They also reject the possibility that their partner could have been just as happy with another person.

Lovers in bad faith do not want to be compared with other potential partners, as this makes their love relative rather than a unique, special bond. It is distressing to think of the beloved comparing me with others, identifying my faults and holding them against me. I do not want her to have ever seriously considered having a relationship with anyone else. This leads to the lovers' constant shame. When we are looked at together, we both experience ourselves as objects for the third person (BN, 498). Then our love is made relative in a world for other people, for whom this love is unimportant.

However, authentic romantic love overcomes these problems. First of all, as I argued above, authentic lovers accept the contingency of their love. This involves accepting that they met by chance, that they are not soulmates, and that they could have been as happy with other people. Authentic lovers do not experience anxiety when they consider that they met by chance, but rather rejoice in their good fortune in having met (Nyholm and Frank 2017). Having met by chance does not detract from how special the beloved is, for how special she

is results from the effort that the lovers have invested in the relationship. When we first met, the beloved was not special amongst all others for me. Rather, she became special through my choice to pursue a relationship with her, and the effort that we continue to put into our relationship.

By accepting contingency, the authentic lovers also resist the Look of the third person that relativizes their love. The lover recognises that their beloved could have chosen to love anyone else, but they see this as something that makes their commitment more special. They commit to being faithful but recognise that this commitment could be broken at any time. What makes the commitment strong is nothing but the strength of their decision to stay together.

In *Being and Nothingness*, the Look of the third person destroys love when it makes the beloved into an object, as the lover's project is to possess the beloved as a free subject. Although authentic lovers no longer pursue the God-project, there remains a danger of the third person's look making them aware of each other as mere means or tools in the world, undermining their mutual comprehension of each other as ambiguously subject and object. But, as long as the beloved regards the lover as more than a means, tool, or in-itself, it is possible to resist the Look of the third person together. Suppose that my partner and I are arguing on public transport when another passenger glares at us. Immediately, we become aware of ourselves as being annoying in the mode of being-in-itself, for the other passenger has not considered why we are arguing or what we are trying to achieve by doing so—in other words, he has not comprehended us. We are just an annoyance to him. He hopes that his glare will make us ashamed of ourselves and therefore stop arguing. However, although my partner and I might stop arguing loudly, we might whisper furiously to each other about

the other passenger. We might glare back at him, returning the Look, asserting ourselves as subjects and making him into the object. We also justify ourselves to each other—he doesn't understand why we were arguing and we weren't that loud; he is uptight. By trying to justify our arguing, we reveal to each other our subjectivity once again. The Look of the third person does not negate our experience of ourselves as free subjects because, in authentic love, mutual comprehension counteracts the power of the Other's Look to make us feel like mere objects.

Authentic lovers react in the same way even if it is only one of them who is looked at by a third person. Suppose that my partner does something embarrassing—for example, he blows his nose loudly during a concert. Another person looks at him and both me and my partner become immediately aware of my partner as disgusting and rude. A Look directed at my partner is experienced as a Look by us both. But I might respond to the Look of our fellow concertgoer with my own glare, intended to make that person aware of himself as fussy and miserable. My reaction is motivated by my comprehension of my partner. I understand that my partner is not rude or disgusting, he is recovering from a cold and it is better that he blows his nose rather than letting it drip down his shirt. My comprehension of my partner as a subject allows us to resist the objectifying Look of the third person.

Sartre recognises the resistance of the lovers to the Look of the third person in *The Chips Are Down* (1952). Eve's friends are astonished to see Eve, a middle-class woman, in a relationship with Pierre, a manual worker and resistance fighter. When her friends whisper about them, Eve's reaction is to return the Look. She confronts her friends and tells them that she is leaving her husband for Pierre, and that they can spread the news.

Same and Other

Bad faith love involves a desire to merge with the Other, but also a wish for the Other to retain her character as Other (BN, 483-5). Lovers desire to fuse because they wish to live together in perfect harmony. Their love would be more secure, and thus the lover would be guaranteed a positive fixed nature. Furthermore, the desire to merge is also the desire to possess. If the lovers merge, the lover incorporates his beloved and thus fully appropriates her. Fused, the lover would be able to know what his beloved really thinks of him and whether she loves him. But the lover will never be satisfied, as the beloved will always have hidden experiences that she has not shared with him. Bad faith love desires to remove all conflict between the lovers, and hence the desire to merge. But the lovers will be perpetually frustrated. It is impossible to merge with the Other whilst she retains her character as other. Furthermore, the fact of our ontological separation from the Other means that it is impossible to form a joint subject with another person. In love, I have immediate and direct acquaintance with myself only, which is my pre-reflective self-consciousness.

However, authentic lovers do not desire to merge. They conceive of themselves as a partnership rather than a single individual. The lovers have separate projects and interests, and support each other in pursuing them. They think of themselves as separate and complete people who choose to be in relationship with each other. Furthermore, what the lover loves about the beloved are the ways in which she differs from him. If he loves her for the ways in which she resembles him, then this is no longer love and more akin to narcissism. He loves her freedom and unpredictability, which keep the relationship from stagnating.

One reason why the bad faith lover wishes to merge with his beloved is that he wants to know and control what his beloved thinks of him. This is not a source of conflict in authentic love. In authentic love, the lover embraces that his beloved discloses new dimensions of his being (NE, 499; 507-8). Furthermore, the beloved seeks only to unveil his being, not to appropriate it. She wishes to protect his fragility, not to take advantage of it.

Because the beloved is an uncontrollable freedom, this means that there is inevitably conflict in authentic love relationships. But this is just because the lovers are two separate beings with different views and projects, and so are bound to disagree on occasion. This conflict is not necessarily bad, but is rather something that the lovers should embrace, as it can help to sediment the new values of authenticity. As we saw in Chapter 3, Adrian Mirvish (1996, 2002) terms this kind of conflict, 'positive conflict'. In positive conflict, lovers challenge each other on their bad faith. For example, suppose that I tell my partner that I cannot take a dance class with him because I am too clumsy. He insists that I am not too clumsy and that I cannot know with certainty that I am bad at something before I try it. Or suppose that my partner says to me that he cannot apply for a particular job, because he is not as good as the other candidates. I may persuade him to apply, perhaps arguing that he is as good as the others, or that he will never know if he is good enough for the job unless he applies for it

In order to learn from each other in this way, lovers must be honest with themselves and with each other. Then they can have the kinds of profound conversations that lead to living more authentically. Of course, honesty comes with a risk—the Other might laugh at me, or tell other people, or agree with the negative things that I think about myself—but this is part of the struggle of authentic love.

The Other is able to reveal things about myself that I am unable to learn by myself. When I reflect on myself, I do not have the requisite distance to be able to fully and completely grasp all of my traits and behaviours. My self-reflection is also too often clouded by bad faith. I want to have a positive self-image, so I deceive myself about what I am really like. Sartre argues in *Being and Nothingness* that this is why psychoanalysis cannot be carried out on oneself, but rather requires the perspective of the Other (BN, 741). Lovers are able to disclose new dimensions of each other. This enables more authentic self-reflection, which could lead to the adoption of an authentic attitude across the whole of one's life.

Finally, authentic lovers do not wish to merge because they appreciate each other's differences. These differences provide opportunities to learn from each other and thus grow as individuals (Cleary, 2015). The lover answers his beloved's appeal to help her with her project. For example, if she wants to learn French, he might try to learn alongside her so that she can practice. But the lover does not appropriate the beloved's ends—he does not become competitive and try to make the language lessons all about himself. In this way, the lovers strive together. They consider themselves to be a team, facing life's challenges together. For these reasons, the lover has to allow his beloved to have a life outside of their love, otherwise they cannot grow together and their relationship will stagnate.

Sartre illustrates the need for lovers to strive together in *The Chips are Down* (1952). Eve and Pierre are both dead, but are given the chance to return to the living if they can love each other with perfect confidence for one day. They are given this chance to live again because they are soulmates but missed out on the chance of meeting in life. They do not manage to love each other with perfect confidence before the time is up; Pierre returns to help his comrades with their rebellion, and Eve tries to save her sister from her abusive husband.

This play shows us that, although love must be freely given, it is more than a simple choice to love the Other. There is no such thing as love at first sight, and soulmates are a myth. Rather, love is the product of striving together. Authentic lovers have gone through things together, and it is this that gives rise to their love.

Ontological Implications

So far in this chapter, I have argued that authentic romantic love is practically possible. I first explained how it is possible by arguing that it is the third moment in a dialectic that resolves the contradiction between the original ambiguous union of the mother-child relationship and our alienated separation from Other. I then demonstrated how authentic romantic love overcomes the problems of bad faith in *Being and Nothingness*, and identified features of authentic romantic love that are hopefully recognisable in modern day relationships. In this final section, I will consider the ontological implications of my argument in this thesis.

My argument has not challenged Sartre's basic distinction in *Being and Nothingness* between being-for-itself and being in-itself. I agree with Sartre that this ontology is exhaustive (Schilpp 1997). Instead, my developmental account of the subject has intended to expand our conception of being-for-itself to include the infant's way of being-in-the-world.

Sartre suggests that one cannot be human without being-for-the-Other (BN, 384). As being-for-the-Other cannot be derived from being-for-itself alone but requires the existence of the Other, this suggests that the Other is central to human being. But later, in the chapter on concrete relations, Sartre relegates others to the mere tools that I employ to achieve my God-

project. The God-project is the fundamental project that underpins all of the actions I perform, but it is completely focused on myself—only I will become like God. The Other is therefore only incidentally involved in my fundamental project—he is just a means; if there were a more effective way of achieving my God-project without the Other, then my fundamental project would not involve him at all.

This is a dissatisfying account of our concrete relations with Others, given that the Other is central to the definition of human being. The Other is more intimately related than this to the for-itself. On my account, the Other is necessary for the formation of the human subject. My developmental account of human relations therefore does justice to Sartre's ontological claim that human being is dependent on the Other. I have described how the richer senses of self emerge through the mother-child relationship, our first relationship with the Other. The newborn infant's minimal, ecological, and interpersonal senses of self are the ontological structures of the burgeoning human subject. The subject is then transformed by the acquisition of an extended, a private and a conceptual sense of self, along with an ego, the ability to self-reflect and a theory of mind, which are developed through the relationship with the mother.

The first Look that we experience is not hostile but loving. The Other makes me aware of myself as a loved object. Later, once one can self-reflect and possesses a conceptual sense of self, the Look will begin to appear as alienating. We are socialised into a culture of bad faith such that awareness of the Other's freedom is an anti-value. But authentic relations are possible as adults because our primary encounter with the Other was not hostile. Prompted by the ambiguous union of the erotic encounter, we are capable of returning to authentic love as adults. I have suggested that authentic love might therefore be the key to a Sartrean

ethics. The mother transmits love through the generations, and grounds the possibility of experiencing authentic relations with others.

My account of the ambiguous union might tentatively suggest that we may need to abandon the idea of a unitary, autonomous, bounded, and sovereign subject. I have described how the boundaries of the body can blur through an expansion of the ecological sense of self in pregnancy, childrearing, and the erotic encounter. These experiences have been taken up by feminist philosophers to challenge the unitary subject. For example, Iris Marion Young (1984; 1985), agreeing with Kristeva, argues that pregnancy is an experience of split subjectivity. It is a mode of bodily existence in which the borders between self and other, subject and object, come into question and potentially dissolve. Debra Bergoffen (1997) claims that the erotic encounter is a special experience because here the boundaries of the subject can be transgressed without violating subjectivity, and this gets rid of our illusion of sovereign subjectivity. Tania Welsh (2012) proposes that experiences such as these show us that the subject is not unitary or bounded. The myths of wholeness and closure are a hangover from the separateness and primacy of the Cartesian disembodied mind.

However, on my account, the subject remains unitary insofar as there is a minimal sense of self. Non-positional self-consciousness continues to personalise consciousness and therefore to individuate subjects. Perhaps this reveals that the minimal sense of self is the most fundamental, whereas the other senses of self can open up to include others in certain experiences. For example, an expansion of the private sense of self might be hearing your lover's voice in your head, or being able to predict what they will say. The lover could come to be included in one's conceptual sense of self—you define who you are in relation to your partner. The extended sense of self might even come to include the Other; the time before I

met my lover feels like a different era. Meeting him was a discrete jump that feels like a new origin point in my time. My life now has a certain meaning that all my projects share; a meaning which did not exist before I fell in love. Perhaps the traditional account of subject could be replaced with a new idea of the subject as layered, with the minimal sense of self at its core.

In summary, this chapter has aimed to show that authentic romantic love is possible, despite our immersion in a culture of bad faith. Authentic romantic love is the synthesis of the original ambiguous union between mother and child and our mature alienation and separation from the Other. Authentic love attempts to replace the sedimented values of bad faith and, if successful, can lead to a new life of authenticity.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to show that authentic love is possible from within Sartre's philosophy. Chapter 1 set up the problem that this thesis seeks to resolve. Sartre convincingly argues that we are all following the bad faith God-project, including in romantic love. But whilst we can recognise Sartre's descriptions of bad faith love in our own relationships, we also believe that we have experienced the authentic love that he depicts in the *Notebooks*. But how can authentic love be possible in a society afflicted with widespread bad faith? This is the question that my thesis has set out to address.

Chapter 2 rejected two attempts to demonstrate that authentic romantic love is possible: the communication argument and the conversion argument. However, I suggested that the communication argument might be rehabilitated. Authentic relations with others, such as communication, might be possible if it could be shown that our original awareness of the Other is non-conflictual. This is what Chapters 3 and 4 attempted to demonstrate. Chapter 3 argued that mother and child first exist in an ambiguous union, where the Other is grasped as both subject and object. It is within the ambiguous union that the infant first becomes aware of the Other as subject through being the object of a loving Look. Our primary encounter with the Other is non-conflictual because the infant is not yet capable of bad faith. Chapter 4 examined the features of mother-child love and found it to be authentic. Chapter 5 argued that the authentic love between mother and child grounds the possibility of authentic romantic love. Interpersonal conflict arises from being socialised into bad faith as a child. But, prompted by the experience of a second ambiguous union in the erotic encounter, we are able to recreate authentic love as adults because life develops

in spirals. Authentic romantic love is the third moment in a dialectic which includes and surpasses the original ambiguous union and our alienated separation from the Other. Chapter 5 then described the features of authentic romantic love, showing that it overcomes the problems of bad faith and thereby providing an account of authentic romantic love that is hopefully recognisable for many.

Whilst this thesis claims to have shown that authentic love is practically possible, there are limitations to my research. Firstly, I only considered biological mothers when arguing that mother-child love is authentic. A further question is how my argument could be extended to primary caregivers in general. Secondly, Chapter 5 only dealt with monogamous romantic relationships, but it would be interesting to see whether open relationships, such as that between Sartre and Beauvoir, could be shown to be authentic. Finally, I have only considered heterosexual romantic love. My arguments would most likely apply to homosexual romantic love, but I believe that it deserves a separate inquiry to investigate the different role that patriarchy plays in these relationships.

My thesis raises two avenues for further research. Firstly, my developmental account of the for-itself challenges the traditional unitary and bounded subject. I suggested that this could be replaced with a conception of the subject as layered, with the minimal sense of self at its core. Secondly, I conjectured that mother-child love might be used as the basis upon which to found a Sartrean ethics, where our obligations to respect others' freedom are grounded in the fraternal relation of all being born of a mother. Future work could draw on Sartre's final interviews to sketch out such a theory.

I hope to have shown in this thesis that motherhood ought to be given more attention in philosophy. Sartre has a compelling theory of the mother-child relationship that deserves further consideration. Finally, I hope that I have provided a description of authentic romantic love that resonates with many people. Thinking philosophically about what authentic love would look like can help us to reform our relationships and bring authentic love into our own lives.

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